BING

Winter 2008

No. 150

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

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Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

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EDITORIAL

Holiday greetings to all of my fellow ICC members and associates. It's hard to believe another year is drawing to a close so quickly. But it has been an eventful year in the world of Bing Crosby, and 2009 promises to bring us many new and exciting projects and developments.

The big news since the Summer issue is the opening of another Bing Crosby's Restaurant. This one opened in September in San Diego, and joins the other California establishments in Walnut Creek and Rancho Mirage. Members planning to travel to the West Coast over the Christmas holiday should add a stop to one of the Bing Crosby's Restaurants to your itinerary. You'll enjoy some good food and great Bing Crosby atmosphere. John Walton has a report on his visit to the Rancho Mirage venue later in this issue.

On October 14th, co-incidentally the thirty-first anniversary of Bing's passing, Universal Home Video released a new three-disc box set of Bing's classic film *Holiday Inn* on DVD. Ken Crossland reviews it in *Keeping Track* and you will read some of my enthusiastic comments there. Suffice to say at this point, it's marvelous and hopefully it will gain plenty of TV showings now that there's a color version of this classic film. I can't imagine that I'll ever watch the black and white version again. I've put together a montage of scenes from the film on the back cover of this issue.

This new DVD, along with the latest issue of the Sepia Records series of Bing's commercial recordings, "Through The Years, Volume 2", the forthcoming ICC exclusive CD release of rare Woodbury tracks courtesy of Michael Feinstein, makes for a lot of good viewing and listening as we head into 2009. Incidentally, I am told that the long awaited "Seasons" issue is now planned for spring, 2009.

So until next time, Happy Holidays to all of you, and best wishes for a healthy and bountiful New Year.

Greg Van Beek

It is with regret that we have news of the death of another major Crosby collector and sadly we must now say goodbye to Jack Souther. John Newton has a tribute on a subsequent page.

Some of you will have noticed that the photographs in the inside of the last issue were not up to the usual standard. It seems that there were problems with the printer's equipment which have now been rectified. The printer sends his sincere apologies.

The BING magazine web site has had to change address as AOL Hometown has closed down. Please note the new address on the inside cover. Amongst other things, the site contains Lionel Pairpoint's magnificent

radio book and we have just added the TV book to it too. So everything you need to know about Bing on radio and television can be found there.

This jam-packed edition is the 150th issue of BING magazine. Frank Murphy would be amazed to find that his 1966 creation was still thriving. Apart from the montage on the back cover, we also have to thank Greg for the front cover showing Bing in his Christmas 1971 special.

You will read about a questionnaire relating to the annual Leeds meeting. Numbers are just about holding steady at 40 but it would be great if more people could attend. For what it's worth, my ideal Leeds weekend would be:

> Arrival Saturday afternoon. Meet for pre-dinner drinks. Dinner, with a speaker if we have a star guest or if not a few words from Michael. Sunday: leisurely breakfast. 10:30 start of meeting. 1-2p.m. buffet lunch. 2-4:30p.m. meeting, then break for cup of tea. 5-6:30 final session of meeting. This would be early enough for people to journey home. Those attending could stay at less expensive accommodation nearby if desired. People could attend on either day without committing to both.

But I'll be there whatever the format. So please take the time to fill in the questionnaire so that Michael can organise the meeting to suit your wishes.

I join Greg in wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Malcolm Macfarlane

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

Leeds 2008 was an exceptional meeting with our special day being covered by BBC Radio Cumbria with original audio and visual treats being presented by Malcolm Macfarlane. The new material from Bing's Woodbury shows and from the Hollywood Palace entranced members. It was sheer joy to be listening to Bing in magnificent voice singing songs from the 1930's we had never heard previously. I would like to thank Malcolm for presenting an outstanding programme.

Bob Halls reports on the meeting in this issue and he has prepared a questionnaire to be issued to UK and European members so as to ascertain your views on holding future meetings. We will be very pleased to receive and consider your opinions/views/thoughts with the intention of making the yearly dinner/meeting appealing to as many members as practicable.

Michael is interviewed on air by Harry King (left) at the Leeds meeting.

JOHN TEALE COLLECTION

Members may recall that last issue we indicated that John's extensive collection was to be auctioned. Malcolm duly advised family members about lots and suggested pricing and the auction was held on September 9 in the village of Knutsford in Cheshire. As Malcolm was on holiday, your secretary and Crosby friend Alf Bunn attended the auction and we were amazed that one individual bought the entire collection. We attempted to bid against him several times but he simply kept raising his card to outbid us and he succeeded in buying lots 140 to 165.

We were delighted that the collection stayed together in the hands of this collector. The gentleman, who wore red braces, was very keen on keeping the collection whole and when I asked him if he was a Crosby collector he answered "no, but that he was about to become one."

NEW MEMBERS

It is a pleasure to welcome the following new members to the ICC and we trust that through their membership they will be enriched and be able to improve their knowledge of Bing's career.

UNITED STATES & CANADA

Marty Hughes (St. Louis, Missouri), Chelsea Martin (Eden Prairie, Minnesota), Brandon Mullis (North Augusta, South Carolina) John Fusco (Scarsdale, New York), Delores Markwood (Xenia, Ohio), Jack Nelson (Concord, California), Daryl Shepard (Hattiesburg, Mississippi), Kevin Cunningham (Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada), Greg Howden (Surrey, British Columbia, Canada)

UNITED KINGDOM

Mr. W. Aikman (Hamilton, Scotland)

DONATIONS

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support provided by the following members –
Michael Winspear, Harry Ross, Bill England, Arthur Blood, Charles Campbell, Nicholas Morrison, Ken Heason

DEATHS

With sadness I draw members' attention to the passing of the following:-
Charlie Tupper (Sidmouth, East Devon), **John Vaughan** (Birmingham), **Eric Jackson** (Wath Upon Dearne, South Yorkshire), **Raymond O'Toole** (Dublin, Ireland)

Charlie, Eric and Raymond were all enthusiastic visitors to the Leeds meeting and it is particularly sad for me to realise that we will not have the pleasure of their company any more.

Charlie Tupper was a friend to your secretary of nigh on 50 years and he helped me with my Crosby collecting, particularly in the early years. We used to travel by train in the sixties to attend meetings in London and the North East and Charlie always brought enthusiasm for his subject to those gatherings. Charlie had an uncanny eye for spotting a Bing rarity and he would search diligently in record shops to find any hidden Bing treasures, some of them being passed on to me. Charlie was a true gent, a great Crosby Collector (joining the club in 1954) with a warm and kindly disposition. Charlie had many friends in the ICC and we will miss him dearly.

Eric Jackson was a founding member of the British Bing Club way back in 1950 and for 58 years he remained a faithful and enthusiastic Crosby admirer and collector. In the year 2000 we presented Eric and the late Michael O'Toole with their certificates, commemorating their 50-year association with the club. Eric was the last but one of the founding members of the British Bing Club leaving our kind beneficiary Jean Rainey as the only remaining 1950 member.

Raymond O'Toole was a jovial, convivial Irishman who new his Bing and loved to sing along to Bing's recordings. He would get people singing at Leeds and clearly he loved to convey his enthusiasm for Bing's voice to others. Cybil, Raymond's wife has told us that Raymond was a gifted individual, who cared deeply about others and that he had a thorough knowledge of the Irish and Spanish languages.

To the wives, family and friends of Charlie, Eric, Raymond and John we extend our sincere condolences.

BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS VOL 2 – SEPIA 1122

Sepia Records are to be congratulated once again for producing an excellent follow up to volume 1. There are no less that 8 test pressings used and the transfers are stunning. Our grateful thanks are due to Robin Cherry (mastering), Geoff Milne (records), Ron Bosley (photos) and Malcolm Macfarlane (record data and sleeve notes).

Copies of volumes 1 & 2 can be obtained from me at my home address.

CALENDAR 2009

Ron Bosley has put together another fine calendar that utilises the theme of scenes from Bing's films. Unfortunately, a small price increase is necessary to cover increased printing costs but despite the uplift we trust that members will support this attractive publication.

LEEDS 2009

Date for your diary is Sunday October 4th 2009 but UK and European members please see questionnaire where your comments are invited.

Until spring, my kindest regards to all members.

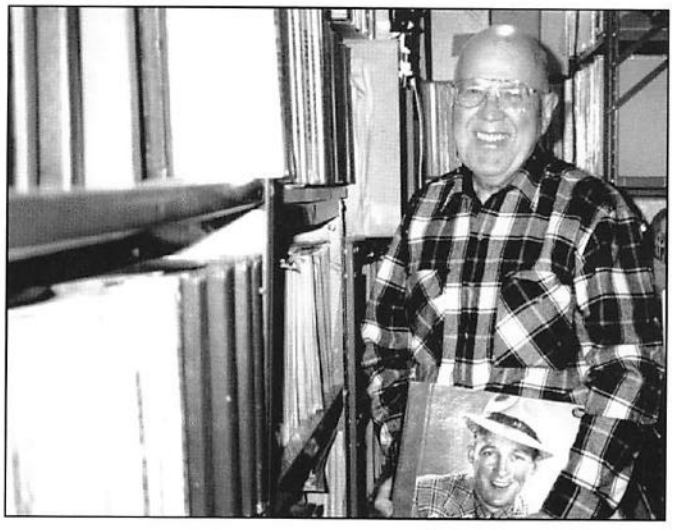
Michael Crampton

Jack Souther

It is with sadness that I report the death of Jack Souther, one of the giants among collectors of Bing Crosby records and related mementos. Over the years, most serious Crosby collectors came to know Jack, either personally, via correspondence or by reputation.

Jack's appreciation of Bing as a recording artist turned to a collecting obsession after World War II, and few others could claim such long term affection for all things Bing-related, his being a passion that lasted for more than 60 years.

Veteran record collectors may recall Jack's numerous advertisements, seeking any odd or unusual Crosby recordings, beginning in long defunct periodicals such as The Record Changer (early 1950's) and lasting until the past year or two. If anything, Jack was persistent, and his focus and persistence paid off on many occasions.

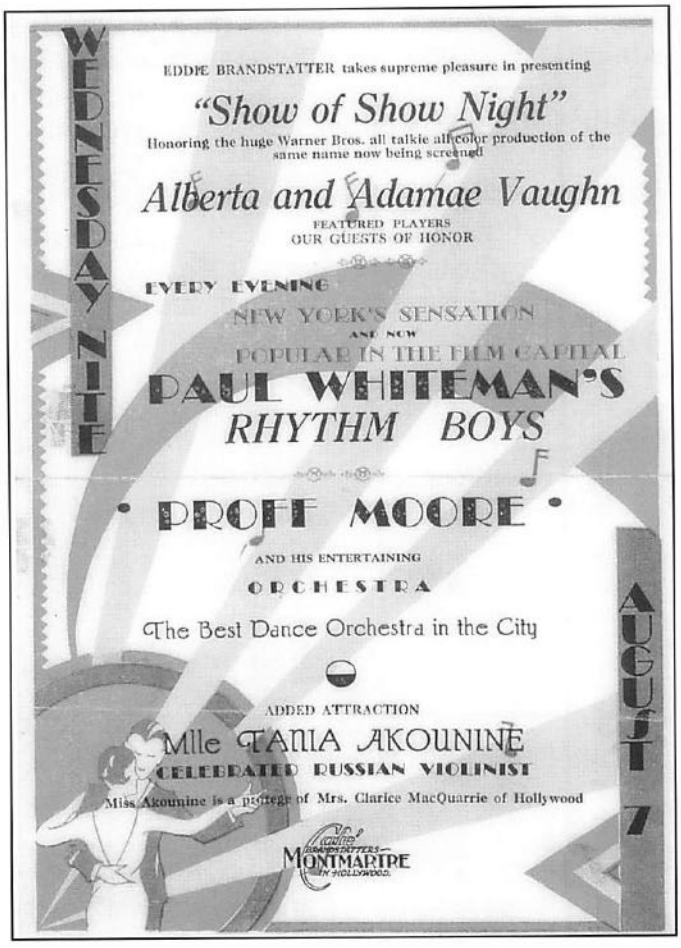


Jack in the midst of his collection in 1995

Among Jack's phenomenal collection were records that had once belonged to Jack Kapp, Joe Perry (A&R man for Decca) and Bing himself. Living in San Francisco, Jack was front and center at the Crosby Estate Auction in the early 1980's, obtaining yet more record rarities and Bing memorabilia.

Friends and contacts might easily recall Jack's letters, always clearly printed, never cursive, often appearing on blocked pages from Pacific Gas & Electric where Jack had worked until retirement. Phone conversations and personal visits could also prove very enlightening.

It is with reverence that I mention that Jack could often have what is best described as a Jekyll & Hyde personality. If you were talking about the weather, or sports, or various topics, Jack was always the kindly Dr. Jekyll... but if the conversation turned to records and someone tried to coax him into parting with a record, especially a Crosby record, Mr. Hyde instantly appeared. It was like a she-wolf baring her fangs and guarding her young. Jack was simply that protective of the collection he'd gathered.



Jack maintained his enthusiasm for Bing until the end. He had contacted me last autumn (2007), advising me that he'd been diagnosed with an inoperable and terminal illness, and numerous letters and phone conversations followed. One day earlier this year a note arrived, shorter than some of the drawn out letters and conversations we shared. In it Jack mentioned a wooden plaque that he'd obtained at the Crosby Estate Auction, stating that he thought I'd like to have this item. Shortly afterward a parcel arrived containing the plaque. Bing had had an old advertising handbill professionally mounted and laminated onto this wooden plaque. It was a handbill announcing the appearance of Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys, appearing with others as part of the floor show at the Cafe Montmartre in Hollywood, August 7th (1929). There was obviously some sentimentality attached, for it was at the Cafe Montmartre that Bing first met Dixie Lee.

In addition to Bing, Jack also collected records by numerous other personalities and singers, as well as dance bands and jazz. All the records are now gone, many finding new homes and custodians where they'll continue to be appreciated, with the remaining bulk going to a noted record dealer. Jack lived a full life, devoted to his family and his records. He will be sorely missed among the Crosby collecting family. Jack died on June 19th; he was 89.

John Newton

Bing Crosby Entertains – for Woodbury Soap

As mentioned in our last issue, noted record producer Geoff Milne has been putting together a CD of rare Woodbury songs for us from material generously supplied by Michael Feinstein. We owe a huge debt to Geoff for the hard work he has put into tidying up what were, in some cases, very worn tracks. Even so, some of the songs are hardly hi-fi but nevertheless they are bound to be appreciated because of their rarity. Several of the tracks were played at Leeds and received a rapturous welcome as you will read in this issue. Jon Oye has very kindly been working on the art work and the technical side of the CD booklet whilst Richard Tay of Sepia Records has introduced us to the company that duplicates CDs for him.

Michael Feinstein has authorised us to offer the CD to members on a non-profit basis with the request that the songs are not copied for other purposes and a separate insert should be with this magazine to enable you to order it. Only 500 CDs are being made but hopefully this should cover the likely demand.

The songs:

1 Intro and extract - FOR ALL WE KNOW (Coots, Leslie) October 9, 1934
2 BEAUTIFUL GIRL (Brown, Freed) December 11, 1933
3 THE LAST ROUND UP (Hill) December 11, 1933
4 I'M HUMMIN', I'M WHISTLIN', I'M SINGIN' (Revel, Gordon) September 18, 1934
5 JUST A-WEARYIN' FOR YOU (Bond) September 18, 1934

6 LOVE IN BLOOM (Rainger, Robin) November 13, 1934
7 I'M IN LOVE (Mysels, Simon) October 9, 1934
8 THE SWEETHEART WALTZ (Drake, Kent, Lombardo) October 9, 1934
9 I'M GETTING SENTIMENTAL OVER YOU (Bassman, Washington) October 30, 1934
10 TWO CIGARETTES IN THE DARK (Pollack, Webster) October 30, 1934
11 P.S. I LOVE YOU (Jenkins, Mercer) October 30, 1934
12 THE MOON WAS YELLOW - extract (Ahlert, Leslie) October 16, 1934
13 DINAH (Akst, Lewis, Young) November 13, 1934
14 A NEW MOON IS OVER MY SHOULDER (Brown, Freed) November 6, 1934
15 MAYBE I'M WRONG AGAIN (Trent, Bennett) November 6, 1934
16 OUT IN THE COLD AGAIN (Bloom, Koehler) November 13, 1934
17 ST. LOUIS BLUES (Handy) (part only) with The Boswell Sisters. November 6, 1934
18 IF I HAD A MILLION DOLLARS (Malneck, Mercer) November 13, 1934
19 WITH EVERY BREATH I TAKE (Rainger, Robin) November 27, 1934
20 LOVE IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER (Gensler, Robin) November 27, 1934
21 JUNE IN JANUARY (Rainger, Robin) November 27, 1934
22 THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU (Noble) extract and sign-off. September 18, 1934

All titles with Georgie Stoll & His Orchestra except 2 & 3 with Lennie Hayton Orchestra.

Bonus - Songs from The Union Oil Show – September 25, 1932

23 LOVE ME TONIGHT (Young, Crosby, Washington)
24 SAY IT ISN'T SO (Berlin)
25 SOME OF THESE DAYS (Brooks)

With Lennie Hayton (piano) and Eddie Lang (guitar)

Our sincere thanks to Michael Feinstein for making this issue possible. Michael has been touring in connection with his 24th album "The Sinatra Project" (a tribute to Frank). He tells me that he would dearly love to do something similar for Bing if an opportunity can be found

Bing Crosby's Restaurant

Another one has opened! Army Archerd wrote about it as follows in *Variety* on September 2.

Bing Sings Again

Bing Crosby's restaurant and piano lounge bowed tonight in San Diego's Fashion Valley Mall—with widow Kathryn Crosby on hand to sing some of Der Bingle's hits. She reprised "Pennies From Heaven" along with other favorites in duets with Bob Pasch with whom Kathryn performs her act successfully cross country.

Also on hand for the eatery/lounge bow was daughter Mary C. and husband Mark Brodka who had created the Crosby web site. The eatery is the third in the proposed chain, two successfully already in Rancho Mirage and Walnut Grove by Dudum Sports Enterprises' Jeff and Rick Dudum. Mary says, "My mom is so pleased with them." Mary continues her career in Henry Jaglom's "Queen Of The Lot"—and Kathryn will have a role as "a great movie star."

Praise for the Bing Crosby's Restaurant in Rancho Mirage comes to us from Nancy Sinatra, Jr. who toasts its "ambiance, decor—food." She says the Sinatras have also talked about a restaurant in Frank's name—like a launching in Las Vegas. But, she says, they decided it would be too expensive a venture.

Army Archerd

(Editor: As you will have read, our own Bob Pasch was there too and dueted with Kathryn on "True Love" and "White Christmas". Bob gave us the good news that a fourth restaurant is planned for Scottsdale, Arizona.

Bob is surrounded by Bing's special ladies.

John Walton had the great pleasure of eating at the Rancho Mirage Restaurant recently and he now tells us all about it.

Bing Crosby's Restaurant at Rancho Mirage

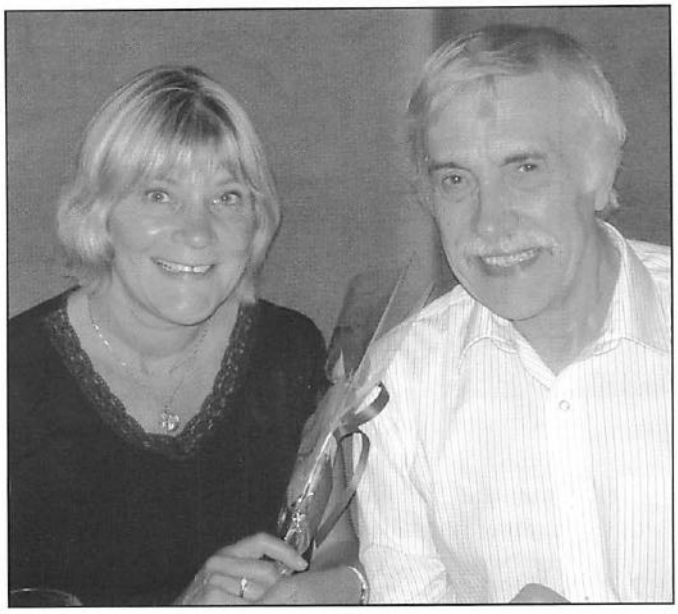
"This restaurant had better be worth it!"

Jill was suffering from the journey we'd just made through heavy traffic on the freeway from Long Beach to Indian Wells and by a sudden attack of 113 degrees

Fahrenheit when we got out of the car. I suppose I was pushing it a bit. Choosing a holiday birthday present to the Californian coast was one thing, but a 'Bing' trip of 120 miles into the desert for our anniversary was quite another. Even my cousin who lives in Los Angeles questioned the sanity of driving all that way 'just to eat'.

Perhaps I should have heeded some of the adverse comments I'd read on the Internet about Bing Crosby's Restaurant and Piano Bar in Rancho Mirage – no tablecloths, too noisy, small portions – and settled for the quiet option of George's Greek café ten minutes down the road. Too late now! Instead, I feigned an easy confidence as we drove the last nine miles from Indian Wells to Bing's. By this time, Jill had been placated by the quality of the hotel booked for us by Hotwire, so we arrived at the restaurant in a comparatively agreeable frame of mind.

And we were overwhelmed by the quality of the welcome! We were speedily and cheerfully served in the bar area while we waited for our table to be prepared. *High Society*, with the sound turned down, was showing from a high monitor. The band – a small combo - warmed up with a nice rendition of 'I Can't Get Started' that promised much in the way of musical entertainment. When I told Vanessa, one of the staff, that I was a Bing fan from England, we were immediately given a tour of all the photos and memorabilia which adorned every wall in the house. More impressively, Vanessa gave us the background information on just about every picture we looked at. (Can you imagine going into a Roman theme MacDonald's and asking an assistant whether the drawing on the wall was of a second or third century chariot?)



John and Jill Walton at the restaurant.

Vanessa set the tone. Various members of staff, from the chefs to the bar staff, came to our table in the course of the evening to make sure we were happy and expressing their own enthusiasm for the restaurant. Not least was Ana Schultz, the Sales and Marketing Officer, who, if she was not genuinely delighted with her work, was an actress of Oscar-winning potential. She and others were most complimentary about Kathryn Crosby and enthusiastic about having met her.

But to those Internet comments. The restaurant has a bustle, almost a pub atmosphere but with more spaciousness than in most pubs. However, it's not all that noisy and, even when the band was playing, we could still talk to each other without raising our voices. The characteristic 'settee bays' are very comfortable and give a sense of cosiness and privacy without disconnecting occupants from the agreeable house ambience. In this setting, tablecloths would have been out of place.

The appetite of the person who said the portions were too small must have been gigantic. The menu is varied and the meals excellently presented. We can personally recommend the Wedge (blue cheese and bacon), the Lamb Three Ways and Bing's Surf and Turf. By the end of the evening, we were happily struggling through the complimentary sweet, which was presented, together with a red rose, when they knew of our anniversary.

In spite of the 'Hollywood Glitz by Night' tag, the dress code at Bing's is informal. My only slight disappointment was that the band's promise was not fulfilled when they were joined by a singer sounding like Dolly Parton. They were a professional outfit, but none of the music was even distantly reminiscent of Bing. All in all though, we had an excellent evening at a very reasonable price.

As I'd known from the start that we would!

John Walton

New York Events

Martin McQuade keeps us up-to-date.

On December 15th Kathryn Crosby returns to Feinstein's at the Regency where she will perform her World War II tribute *Heroes*, This event will be preceded on Sunday, December 14th by Kathryn's performance of the show at Fort Hamilton Army Installation in Brooklyn. (Her appearance at the NY ex-POWs convention in June in the Catskills was a great success.) Kathryn's show will be prefaced by a screening of a compilation of pertinent film and television clips derived from my collection.

The Lincoln Center Library of the Performing Arts promises this fall a retrospective *Bob Hope: Thanks for the Memories*. Of special interest was a screening on October 28th of *Chrysler Presents The Bob Hope Special* originally aired on February 17th, 1969. Bing Crosby was special guest and joined Hope for some clever vaudeville routines.

Martin McQuade

Broadway and other news

White Christmas

The stage adaptation of Irving Berlin's classic film *White Christmas* is set to make its Broadway premiere at the Marquis Theatre, 1535 Broadway, New York. Directed by Tony Award winner Walter Bobbie (*Chicago*), the show features a book by David Ives (*Is He Dead?*) and Paul Blake, with choreography by Randy Skinner (*42nd Street*). Previews began on November 14, the opening is November 23 for a limited-engagement run through January 4, 2009. Stephen Bogardus, Kerry O'Malley, Jeffry Denman, Meredith Patterson, Charles Dean and Susan Mansur will lead a cast of 33 in the highly anticipated holiday engagement. Bogardus ("Love! Valour! Compassion!") plays the role originated by Bing in the 1954 film original. Bogardus and O'Malley ("Into the Woods") appeared together in a 2005 Boston incarnation of "White Christmas."

Kerry O'Malley as Betty Haynes, and Tony Award nominee Stephen Bogardus in the Bing role as "Bob Wallace"

New Musical *Robin and the 7 Hoods* Eyes 2010 Broadway Debut

A new musical adaptation of the 1964 Rat Pack film *Robin and the 7 Hoods* has set its sights on a Broadway debut in spring 2010. Directed and choreographed by three-time Tony Award nominee Casey Nicholaw (*Spamalot, The Drowsy Chaperone* and the upcoming *To Be or Not to Be*), the production will showcase classic songs from Sammy Cahn and James Van Heusen, such as "My Kind of Town," "Come Fly with Me" and "Call Me Irresponsible."

Robin and the 7 Hoods will feature a book by Peter Ackerman, author of the off-Broadway comedy *Things You Shouldn't Say Past Midnight*. Ackerman was credited with book revisions for the 2006 Broadway revival of *The Pajama Game*.

Robin and the 7 Hoods will feature musical supervision by John McDaniel, costume design by Gregg Barnes, lighting design by Natasha Katz and hair and wig design by Josh Marquette. The show is being produced by Bruce Charet, Dennis Mastro, Dennis Farina, Billy Campbell and executive producer Barry Brown.

Casting and production dates have not yet been set. *(Editor: Done well and with the addition of more Cahn and Van Heusen songs, this could be more entertaining than the original film!)*

The new "Country Girl"

Member **Roger Schore** sent Greg Van Beek a large package of material he had come across with mentions of Bing in recent months. One of the items was the PLAYBILL from the new Broadway production of *The Country Girl*, which Roger has seen. He gives the following review:

"As far as I could see and hear, there is no recording of Bing's used in the production. What is played during a scene change and during curtain calls is Perry Como's "A Dreamer's Holiday". Bing has fallen off the radar so drastically in recent years that I wouldn't be surprised if the critic in question simply confused Como for Crosby.

I was disappointed by the production. It seems to me that most of the scenes lacked dramatic tension and ended with tepid applause. Peter Gallagher was the most successful of the 3 leads. Morgan Freeman and Frances McDormand were never as deeply involved with their roles as Bing and Grace Kelly in my opinion. For me, the movie has always "worked". I wouldn't say that for the current production.

The British import "The Thirty Nine Steps", now appearing on Broadway features Bing's recordings. Before the play begins, his recording of 'Did You Ever See A Dream Walking?' can be heard, and during the intermission, his recording of 'You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me' was heard."

Uan Rasey interviewed

Roger also sent the winter 2007 issue of Leonard Maltin's *Movie Crazy* newsletter (see www.leonardmaltin.com/newsletter.htm), which features an interview with Uan Rasey, who was Bing's trumpeter on radio for years. Uan says "Ozzie Nelson and John Scott Trotter were very close, and that's why, at the end of '43 or '44 I was playing third trumpet on the Bing Crosby radio show, and that was a big thing. I think people heard me because I was a dumb young kid playing high notes that I shouldn't have been. I'd play F's or high G's, and he (Bing) would have letters from back east asking "Who's playing the trumpet?"

Leonard Maltin says: "I just listened to a Crosby

show from the late 40's where he singled you out after you played a nice solo", to which Uan responded "He was very good about that. You couldn't converse with him though. A very private man." Maltin adds: "But appreciative of musicians." Uan replies: "He sure was. That was great."

Later in the interview, when comparing recording times, Uan mentioned that Alfred Newman recorded at 8am, most of the time 9am. For Bing it was 7am, one time 6:30am so he could go and play golf.

Lastly, Roger sent a local New York newspaper titled "All About Jazz", the July 2008 edition, which features a fine review of the new CD "Bing Crosby, Jazz Singer, 1931-41. The reviewer, Suzanne Lorge, is presumably younger, and seems surprised at discovering Bing's jazz roots. She says:

"Most think of Bing Crosby only as the crooning star of *White Christmas* and other studio films of the '40s - '50s; few know that Crosby started out fronting jazz bands and worked with the likes of Hoagy Carmichael, Bix Beiderbecke, Jack Teagarden and the Dorsey Brothers back in the earliest days of his decades-long career. Crosby was, in fact, a notably influential jazz singer of the '20s & '30s- before he branched out to become one of the most-recorded pop voices ever. But any doubts about his capabilities as a jazz singer are set aside with even the most casual listen to the recent issue from Retrieval Recordings: Bing Crosby, Jazz Singer, 1931-41. To hear that gorgeous voice scatting effortlessly with the precision of a tap dancer and sharing harmonies with The Mills Brothers might just change one's mind about what is Crosby's real musical legacy."

(Editor: another convert?)

Universal Studios fire

Greg Van Beek gave us news of the dreadful fire at Universal studios in our last issue and Brian Weber placed an update on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum in September.

According to a well-known mastering engineer I'm acquainted with, who frequently works on compilations covering the 50s and 60s for labels such as Varese and Collector's Choice, the entire Decca masters from the '30s through the '50s were destroyed in the Universal fire. He says anything that was not previously issued on LP or CD is gone. That goes for Bing, Peggy Lee, Judy Garland, Ella Fitzgerald, many others.

Here is what he said:

"Valuable" is an interesting word when used by record companies. "White Christmas" is a valuable song by Bing Crosby since it has made mega-money for Universal. But what about a rare single by Crosby that was only out briefly on a 78RPM record? That may not be valuable in the same sense, but it is a part of history that is lost forever. Anyone ever wishing to do a rarities collection by a well-known artist using songs previously unreleased would have a hard time doing such a project now. In the past, however, all these tapes were pretty much there. I think over the years, my success in finding tapes at Universal was probably 98%. That's pretty good."

This guy knows a lot of people in the business, especially people who work in the tape libraries at the various labels, whom he has frequent contact with in the course of his job. This apparently is what they have told him. So we can all forget about any new-to-CD Bing Crosby material from Universal—from tape sources, anyway. Better buy those new "Chronological" CDs from Sepia, because that's the only way we're ever going to get those '50s Decca songs now. The master tapes no longer exist.

Brian Weber

(Editor: Very sad news indeed. Thank goodness for The Chronological Bing Crosby project.)

Harry Willis Crosby

Our old friend Jim Newell was browsing through some very old film annuals recently and came across the *Film-Lovers' Annual*. This contained the picture of a moustachioed Bing which we reproduce below. The note on it starts off "Harry Willis Crosby – Bing to you – started singing in his college..." Jim thought he knew a lot about Bing but never knew that was his second name was "Willis"!

Bing Crosby
Harry Willis Crosby—Bing to you—started singing in his college glee club, and then found that crooning was even more popular. Anyway, he has crooned his way to success, and a first screen appearance in *King of Jazz* with Paul Whiteman's Band. His real debut was in *The Big Broadcast*, which was followed by such successes as *College Humour* and *Going Hollywood*.

Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters Museum

Back in our summer 2005 issue (#140, page 11) we gave details of a disastrous fire which had damaged the contents of this museum containing many of Bing's artifacts. There have been further

developments as reported first by Richard Wagoner on July 10 and then by Bob Pool of the *Los Angeles Times* on July 11.

If everything goes as planned, today should wrap up the liability phase of the suit against the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power filed by Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters, as the latter tries to obtain cleanup costs for a historic collection of artifacts damaged in December 2004 by the explosion of an underground transformer.

Perhaps "damaged" isn't quite accurate. "Covered in cancer-causing PCBs from the transformer fire" would be closer.

The artifacts, ranging from the master recordings of "Gunsmoke" to Bing Crosby's microphone, have been off limits to anyone not wearing a hazmat suit since the transformer exploded at the Washington Mutual building at Sunset Boulevard and Vine Street in Hollywood.

Also included in the collection is the broadcast industry's first reel-to-reel tape recorder - an Ampex Model 200, serial No. 1 - built specifically so Crosby wouldn't have to perform his show twice, for the Eastern and Pacific time zones; and a letter from Packard automobile dealer Earle C. Anthony asking, "Why don't we start a radio station in Los Angeles?"

Anthony later launched KFI with the transmitter atop his dealership in 1922.

Once the home of NBC Radio, the Washington Mutual building's later owner, Home Savings and Loan, leased the basement to Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters and an adjoining room to the Society of American Magicians, rent-free, beginning in 1967. Robert Ahmanson, whose family owned Home Savings, made the deal in part because of his passion for radio's history, and he later became the nonprofit group's treasurer.

According to Chuck Southcott, former KMPC programmer and president of Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters, the basement also was used for Nostalgia Nights, during which members of the PPB would discuss and re-create old radio and television programs.

The collection, which according to Southcott contains items that may not be salvageable, was scheduled to be donated to the Thousand Oaks Library as the library builds a $35 million American Radio Archives museum and research center. The PPB collection was to be the centerpiece of the new museum, which is being delayed due to problems with fundraising.

Through all this, the DWP has denied any liability for cleanup. More recently, a spokesman said there was no contamination.

Richard Wagoner

The next day the verdict was announced

The city Department of Water and Power will pay two Hollywood museums $75,000 each to settle a dispute over artifacts allegedly contaminated by toxic PCBs in a 2004 electrical transformer fire. Leaders of the nonprofit Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters and the Society of American Magicians agreed to drop their lawsuit against the city after Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Elizabeth Allen White indicated that she was prepared to rule the contamination was not as severe as the two groups claimed.

The separate collections include thousands of original broadcast scripts, transcriptions and vintage pieces of equipment, such as Bing Crosby's personal microphone and gear used by illusionists Harry Houdini and Harry Blackstone Sr. The museums are in the basement of the Washington Mutual bank at Sunset Boulevard and Vine Street. They have remained sealed since the fire. Broadcasters' president Chuck Southcott and John Engman, head of the magicians' Museum and Hall of Fame, said they accepted the settlement with reluctance. Southcott said an earlier estimate indicated decontamination would cost his group more than $500,000.

"Frankly, nobody knows what we're going to do next," Engman said.

Bob Pool

The Bing Crosby Christmas Shows, 1929-77: A Quick Reference Guide

This being the Christmas issue of BING magazine, I thought it would be fitting to take a look back at the famous Bing Crosby Christmas shows that were a staple of radio and television throughout Bing's long career. What follows is a list of a majority of the shows that Bing either hosted or guest-starred on each yuletide season. Special thanks to Malcolm Macfarlane and the late Lionel Pairpoint for their invaluable research.

Greg Van Beek

RADIO

1.) Old Gold Presents Paul Whiteman & His Orchestra 12/24/29 CBS with Jack Oakie & Polly Walker
2.) The Cremo Singer starring Bing Crosby 12/24/31 CBS
3.) The Cremo Singer starring Bing Crosby 12/25/31 CBS
4.) Woodbury Show starring Bing Crosby 12/25/33 CBS with Mills Bros.
5.) Woodbury Show starring Bing Crosby 12/25/34 CBS with The Boswell Sisters
6.) Kraft Music Hall 12/19/35 NBC (Bing cut-in from Hollywood)
7.) Kraft Music Hall 12/24/36 NBC with Jose Iturbi, June Travis & James Gleason
8.) Kraft Music Hall 12/23/37 NBC with The Kraft Choral Society, Madge Evans & Basil Rathbone
9.) Kraft Music Hall 12/22/38 NBC with The Kraft

Choral Society, Benita Hume & Basil Rathbone
10.) Live NBC remote from Bing's home 12/25/38
11.) Kraft Music Hall 12/21/39 NBC with The Kraft Choral Society, Kennedy Brown, Billy Lenhart, & Fay Bainter
12.) Kraft Music Hall 12/19/40 NBC with Allen Jenkins & Donald Crisp
13.) Kraft Music Hall 12/25/41 NBC with Fay Bainter & Frank McHugh
14.) Kraft Music Hall 12/24/42 NBC with Janet Blair, Andrew Tombes, Jack Carson & Fay Bainter
15.) Command Performance 12/24/42 AFRS
16.) Kraft Music Hall 12/23/43 NBC with The Kraft Choral Society
17.) Christmas Eve At The Fronts 12/24/43 with Bing & Bob Hope NBC & CBS
18.) Elgin's Christmas Party 12/25/43 CBS
19.) Bob Hope Pepsodent Show 12/19/44 NBC
20.) Kraft Music Hall 12/21/44 NBC w/The Kraft Choral Society
21.) Philco Radio Hall of Fame 12/24/44 NBC Blue
22.) Elgin's Christmas Party 12/25/44 CBS
23.) Atlantic Spotlight 12/22/45 NBC & BBC
24.) Bob Hope Pepsodent Show 12/25/45 NBC
25.) Command Performance 12/25/45 AFRS
26.) Bob Hope Pepsodent Show 12/24/46 NBC
27.) Philco Radio Time 12/25/46 ABC
28.) Philco Radio Time 12/24/47 ABC (rebroadcast of 1946 show)
29.) The Joyful Hour 12/19/48 MBS
30.) Philco Radio Time 12/22/48 ABC with The Bob Mitchell Boys Choir
31.) Christmas Festival 12/25/48 CBS. Bing is MC
32.) Command Performance 12/25/48 AFRS
33.) The Joyful Hour 12/18/49 MBS
33.) Bob Hope Show 12/20/49 NBC
34.) Bing Crosby Show for Chesterfield 12/21/49 CBS with Ethel Barrymore
35.) Bing Crosby Show for Chesterfield 12/20/50 CBS with Dixie Lee & Boys
36.) Louella Parsons Show 12/24/50 ABC
37.) Bob Hope Show 12/26/50 NBC
38.) Bing Crosby Show for Chesterfield 12 /19/51 CBS with Trudy Erwin & Lindsay Crosby
39.) The Joyful Hour 12/23/51 MBS
40.) Bob Hope Show 12/25/51 NBC
41.) Bing Crosby Show for General Electric 12/25/52 CBS with Gary Crosby
42.) Bing Crosby Show for General Electric 12/20/53 CBS
43.) Bing Crosby Show 12/22/54 CBS (15 min. show)
44.) A Christmas Sing With Bing 12/24/55 CBS
45.) A Christmas Sing With Bing 12/24/56 CBS with Maurice Chevalier & Rosemary Clooney
46.) A Christmas Sing With Bing 12/24/57 CBS with Gary Crosby
47.) A Christmas Sing With Bing 12/24/58 CBS with Kathryn Crosby
48.) A Christmas Sing With Bing 12/24/59 CBS
49.) A Christmas Sing With Bing 12/24/60 CBS with Rosemary Clooney, Jose Ferrer & Kathryn Crosby
50.) A Christmas Sing With Bing 12/24/61 CBS with Jo Stafford & Kathryn Crosby
51.) A Christmas Sing With Bing 12/24/62 CBS with Johnny Mercer, Rosemary Clooney & Kathryn Crosby
52.) A Christmas Sing With Bing 12/24/63 CBS (reportedly this show aired but no copies have surfaced)
53.) New York, New York 12/22/73 VOA
54.) Christmas With The Crosby's 12/25/75 BBC

TELEVISION

1.) Philco Playhouse 12/19/48 NBC-TV (Bing sings 'Silent Night')
2.) Happy Holiday's With Bing & Frank 12/20/57 ABC-TV (Christmas episode of The Frank Sinatra Chesterfield Show)
3.) USO Christmas Show 12/?/58 AFRTS
4.) The Bing Crosby Show 12/11/61 ABC-TV with Shirley Bassey, Dave King, Terry-Thomas, Marion Ryan, Miriam Karlin & cameo by Bob Hope
5.) The Bing Crosby Show 12/24/62 ABC-TV with Mary Martin, Andre Previn & The United Nations Children's Choir
6.) The Bob Hope Comedy Special 12/13/63 NBC-TV (Bing & Jack Benny co-host Bob's annual Christmas show in his absence) with Danny Thomas & Juliet Prowse (in sketches from previously aired Bob Hope Shows)
7.) The Promise 12/24/63 (Bing narrates)
8.) The Bing Crosby Show 12/21/64 ABC-TV (Christmas episode of Bing's situation-comedy with Beverly Garland)
9.) Bob Hope Comedy Special 12/15/65 NBC-TV

Bing catches Hope sleeping on Bob's 1965 Christmas special

10.) The Hollywood Palace 12/25/65 ABC-TV Bing hosts the Christmas episode with guests Harry Crosby III, Dorothy Collins, The Hogan's Heroes cast, and Fred Waring & His Pennsylvanians
11.) The Hollywood Palace 12/24/66 ABC-TV Bing hosts The Crosby Family, Kate Smith, and Bob Newhart
12.) The Hollywood Palace 12/19/67 ABC-TV Bing hosts The Crosby Family, The King Family, Adam West and Louis Nye
13.) The Hollywood Palace 12/21/68 ABC-TV Bing hosts The Crosby Family, Glen Campbell, The Lennon Sisters and John Byner
14.) Bing & Carol : Together Again For The First Time 12/17/69 NBC-TV Bing's first NBC Christmas special, with guests Carol Burnett, Roy Clark and Juliet Prowse
15.) Bob Hope Special 12/18/69 NBC-TV (Bing cameo appearance)
16.) Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In 12/14/70 NBC-TV (cameo to promote Bing's Christmas Special of December 16th)
17.) Bell System Family Theater: Bing Crosby's Christmas Show 12/16/70 NBC-TV w/ The Crosby Family, Melba Moore, Jack Wild, The Doodletown Pipers and Joe Besser
18.) Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In 12/13/71 NBC-TV (cameo to promote Bing's Christmas Special of December 14th)
19.) Bell System Family Theater: Bing Crosby & The Sounds Of Christmas 12/14/71 NBC-TV with The Crosby Family, Robert Goulet, Mary Costa, and Bob Mitchell Singing Boys Choir
20.) Bell System Family Theater: A Christmas With The Bing Crosby's 12/10/72 NBC-TV with The Crosby Family, Sally Struthers, David Hartman and Edward Villella
21.) The Parkinson Show 12/23/72 BBC-TV
22.) Bell System Family Theater: Bing Crosby's Sun Valley Christmas Show 12/9/73 NBC-TV with The Crosby Family, Connie Stevens, John Byner, Michael Landon and Jan Mischa Petkevitch
23.) Bell System Family Theater: Christmas With The Bing Crosby's 12/15/74 NBC-TV with The Crosby Family, Karen Valentine and Mac Davis
24.) The Kathryn Crosby Show 12/25/74 (local San Francisco show)
25.) Merry Christmas, Fred, From The Crosby's 12/3/75 CBS-TV with The Crosby Family, Fred Astaire, Joe Bushkin and The Young Americans
26.) The Kathryn Crosby Show 12/25/75 (local San Francisco show)
27.) The Parkinson Show 12/25/75 BBC-TV (cameo appearance)
28.) Bing Crosby's White Christmas Special 12/1/76 CBS-TV with The Crosby Family, Bernadette Peters, Jackie Gleason and The Trinity Boys Choir

The cast of Bing's 1973 Christmas Show have fun at Sun Valley.

29.) New York City Hall Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony 12/15/76 (local NYC news coverage)
30.) Good Morning America 12/17/76 ABC-TV (sings 'Jingle Bells')
31.) New York, New York 12/25/76 North German TV network
32.) Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas 11/30/77 CBS-TV with The Crosby Family, Twiggy, Ron Moody, Stanley Baxter, David Bowie and The Trinity Boys Choir

Editor: We can always rely on Greg to come up with something new! His article in our last issue about Bing's movie promotional records created some comments as well.

Bill Piccone offered some information about one of the movie promotional records for *Road to Morocco*. He had a copy of it, and it contained the songs "Moonlight Becomes You" and "Ain't Got A Dime To My Name" on side one, and "Road To Morocco" with Bob Hope and "Constantly" by Dorothy Lamour on side two. The songs were introduced by Ken Carpenter. The record was a 12 inch 33 1/3 rpm.

Greg also found an addition too and this is a 45rpm of 'True Love', with interview tracks on side B by Bing. It is very rare and was only sent to radio stations in 1956. Some copies, such as this one, were autographed by Bing on the 'True Love' label. The interview side is #

PRO 306. These cuts can also be heard as part of the bonus features on the *High Society* DVD release.

Finally Martin McQuade weighed in with:

"My father, who was a projectionist, gave me in 1964 a one sided Warner Bros. promotional 33 1/3 record for *Robin and the Seven Hoods* which was meant to be played in between film showings. Frank Sinatra spoke the intros for a few songs, one of which was 'Style' from the soundtrack. I regret to say that this item got lost during a move made many years ago. You might want to add it to the list."

Amazing what turns up – and there's more!

Bing's master tapes on eBay!

Back in June, Greg noticed an item on Ebay headed ***Master tape recorded by BING CROSBY in the United Kingdom Eight songs.*** Greg sought further details from the vendor and was advised

"There is no date on the tape or box. But here's the info that is: MASTER REEL, PETER CLIFF/engineer, KEN BARNES/producer, Phonogram studio London/Clover, DOLBY, Speed 15ips, 24 track. Songs: Love's Old Sweet Song, Try A Little Tenderness, True Love, Straight Down The Middle, Yes Sir That's My Baby, You're The Top, It's Alright With Me, Unchained Melody."

Greg passed details on to Ken Barnes who replied:

Thanks for the message. Yes, that is certainly one of the master reels from the Buddy Cole-Pete Moore sessions. I can't imagine how it got onto eBay. It was generated at Philips Studios in London around late 1978-early '79. The studio no longer exists and I can only surmise that it was somehow "lifted" by someone when the studio was dismantled.

These analog multi-tracks are obsolete and basically redundant since the tracks were mixed-down to digital stereo long ago. As I understood it all of these reels had been destroyed after they had been transferred to digital format. But since this material is copyrighted, it cannot be commercially released without the permission of Bing Crosby Enterprises (who own the vocals) or Vistastar Productions (who own the orchestral backings).

But it certainly is interesting to see it pop up on eBay after all these years. Once again, Greg, thanks for bringing it to my attention.

Best wishes

Ken

The auction for the item started at $39.99 and it eventually sold for $60.99 to someone in Canada.

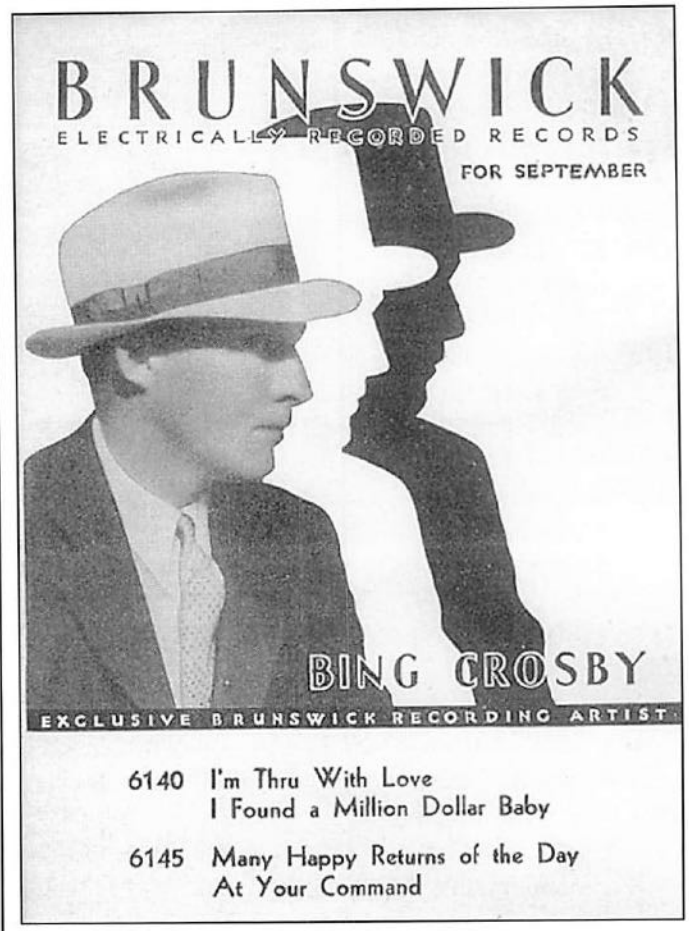
FACE THE MUSIC MYTHS

John Newton explains the background to this rare recording.

Bing Crosby's recording of "Soft Lights And Sweet Music" within the Face The Music Medley (Brunswick 20106) has eluded many collectors of Bing's original records for over 70 years, but why?

Like any type of collectable group, be it coins or stamps or books, certain issues have greater degrees of scarcity than others, and records are indeed no exception.

While some of Bing's Brunswick releases are much more common than others, especially those featuring songs that Bing introduced in his films, why has Brunswick 20106 proven to be so elusive to so many collectors? From his earliest Brunswick issues Bing was obviously Brunswick's top vocal artist in the early 1930's. His photograph was featured on the cover of Brunswick's monthly release catalog for September, 1931, advertising his third and fourth Brunswick records. He was again featured on the cover for February 1932's releases, advertising his theme song recording for Brunswick.



For decades, many Crosby collectors have claimed Brunswick 20106 to be the rarest of Bing's commercially released recordings. Veteran collectors Colin Pugh and Fred Reynolds have both attested to this record's rarity in their fine, detailed volumes covering Bing's recordings. And, while it may be debatable as to exactly which of Bing's commercially released records is "the rarest," there is no question that "Face The Music Medley" is among a relatively small group of records vying for this distinction.

The old rumors that the record was immediately

withdrawn by Brunswick at Bing's request and its master destroyed were proven false many years ago, but that only eliminated what would have been an easy answer to explain the rarity of this record. The real and true reasons were always with us, if one had both the resources and inclination to piece together the life-line of this record, from initial release throughout its history of potential availability.

Certain factors hold true for many records released in the 1932-33 time period. This period was the industry nadir for overall record sales, falling within the pit of the economic depression of the 1930's. Combining this with the $1.25 cost of a 12-inch popular Brunswick would make almost any such release difficult to obtain, but Brunswick 20106 goes several steps beyond the other releases.

First, it was the only 12-inch Brunswick recording featuring Bing that was not released internationally, although I'm certain that Bing's fans world-wide could have had the record imported, in one way or another, had there been an awareness and had they been so inclined.

Secondly, and most significantly, this record suffered from what today would be called a "marketing problem". After its initial release it was never properly and continually advertised, as were almost all of Bing's other Brunswick releases. This was later complicated by Bing's departure from Brunswick and his association with the newly formed American Decca label that created competition for Brunswick in particular, with a combination of cheaper pricing and a stellar roster of artists, many of which had defected from Brunswick to follow Jack Kapp to the new label.

Getting back to "Face The Music Medley," it may surprise most Crosby collectors to learn that, in fact, Brunswick 20106 was available for purchase far longer than almost all of Bing's other Brunswick records. It remained continuously available through any Brunswick dealer for almost 8 years, from its initial release until the demise and discontinuation of the Brunswick label in April of 1940. Following is the time-line of its availability, and the "marketing problem" that negatively impacted ongoing sales despite this availability.

Brunswick's advertising department, like those of most of the major record labels, issued monthly release catalogs. These were often called supplement catalogs because they contained supplementary releases that were not yet contained within the periodic full or complete catalogs that contained all currently available records.

Full catalogs were prepared and issued every two to three years, with the monthly supplements usually containing listings of all the accumulated monthly releases that had become available since the last full catalog. When the next complete catalog was prepared it would contain all the accumulated new releases plus older records that remained available, but minus any records that the company decided to delete due to poor sales or any other reason. So, to see all the records that were currently available one had to look in two places: the most recent complete catalog and the most recent monthly supplement.

"Face The Music Medley," recorded on March 8, 1932, was released in the spring of that year, appearing among the monthly releases for June. In December 1932, and continuing through December 1934, Brunswick's monthly supplements began a new practice of listing all the available records of their most popular artists under the artists' own names. Previously this had only occurred within the complete catalogs. Those whose records were listed in each supplement included Bing, naturally, as well as The Boswell Sisters, The Mills Brothers and Guy Lombardo. "Face The Music," however, was not listed under Bing's name, even though it continued to be available for sale. The reason for this would have been the original decision to label the record under Victor Young's name *with* Bing Crosby added below Victor Young's name. This original labeling decision is the marketing decision that probably cost the record any ongoing popularity and ongoing sales. If at least the Bing side had been labeled like the preceding 12-inch, "St. Louis Blues," with Bing's name first, things might have turned out differently. Nevertheless, the record continued to be listed in every monthly supplement through December 1934, but appeared under its title with no mention of Bing.

The end of 1934 added to Brunswick's woes due to the company's recent loss of Bing and other performers from their stable of popular recording artists. With Bing's recent departure to the newly formed American Decca label, the American Record Corporation, then owner of Brunswick, decided to counter Decca's sales of cheaper records by offering many, though not all, of Bing's earlier Brunswick recordings on their cheaper budget labels.

The December 1934 monthly release supplements for the Melotone and Perfect labels, for example, listed many of Bing's earlier Brunswick recordings as available on those labels for 25 cents each, thereby undercutting his new Decca releases by 10 cents. As an interesting footnote, an anomaly appeared for this one month, December 1934, in that several of Bing's Brunswick titles ("Love In Bloom" for example) appeared under multiple labels at one time. Several titles were still in Brunswick's December 1934 monthly list, at 75 cents, while appearing simultaneously in the December monthly lists of the budget labels at 25 cents!

All this was corrected when Brunswick's new complete catalog appeared in January of 1935. The new complete Brunswick catalog, prepared during October and November of 1934, cut all of Bing's 10-inch records from the catalog, keeping only two records listed under Bing's name: "Lawd You Made The Night Too Long" and "St. Louis Blues". Bing's other two 12-inch Brunswicks, including the subject "Face The Music

Medley" were also retained for sale in the new catalog, but did not appear under Bing's name. "Gems From George White's Scandals" appeared under both The Boswell Sisters (who were still, at the time, Brunswick artists) and under Victor Young's name. "Face The Music Medley" appeared under Victor Young only, although its listing under its title still carried the "*with* Bing Crosby" in smaller print.

"Face The Music" was still available in Brunswick's next complete catalog (through October 1936, printed in September of that year), this being the only time that the title appeared in a full catalog under Bing's name, appearing this way more than four years after its release. The record was also still available in Brunswick's last complete catalog of December 1939, but it was again back under Victor Young's name and not listed under Bing's name. These last two complete Brunswick catalogs were prepared during the latter Brunswick period when the label had changed to reflect Brunswick's newer "full range recording" labels, then printed in silver on black as compared to the earlier gold on black labels. As a result, many Crosby collectors would be surprised to see "Face The Music" appearing on the later silver and black label. If the original gold label is so rare, one might imagine how much scarcer the silver and black label must be. Probably no more than a handful exist, and it should be added that, from a listening perspective, the silver label would be preferable because these were laminated pressings that significantly reduced surface noise.

So, having finally and definitively put to rest rumors to the contrary, Brunswick 20106 proved to be available for sale longer than almost any of Bing's other Brunswick records. The bottom line for its rarity is simply that it did not sell, but at least Bing collectors may now have a better grasp of how it came to be that America's foremost recording artist recorded a lovely composition by America's foremost composer and the result ended up in a "black hole" of record rarities.

One last comment, perhaps as an opinion, remains for Bing's Brunswick 20106, and that would deal with Bing's performance on the record. In the early days of the recording industry record speeds could vary widely, but many record players had speed controls to allow for faster of slower playback. By the 1920's, commercial record speed was generally standardized at approximately 78 rpm, with occasional exceptions. And, from the earlier recording days and continuing into the early 1930's, recording turntables would occasionally go off speed, requiring cleaning and re-calibration to correct their speed. This occurred with Bing's first recording, "I've Got The Girl," which was actually recorded at a speed slower than 78 rpm, but reproduced at a quicker rate when played back at 78 rpm.

Perhaps the converse occurred with "Face The Music," wherein the actual recording may have been done at approximately 80 rpm (a standard speed for some recording from the 1920's through the 1950's) but makes Bing sound slightly more hoarse and "tired" when reproduced and played back at the slower 78 rpm speed. For anyone with a variable speed turntable, an increase of approximately 2.6% will adjust 78 rpm to approximately 80 rpm.

"The later silver label issue."

Utilizing such an adjustment makes Bing's performance of "Soft Lights And Sweet Music" sound more in line with his other vocal performances of the period. If able, try it and compare the results. ("Shadows On The Window," recorded on the same date, may or may not have been recorded on the same turntable, though a similar adjustment produces similar results). In a similar vein, around twenty years ago, after dubbing the damaged, uncoated aluminum transcriptions containing Bing's November 7, 1931 Cremo broadcast for my "Personalities On Parade" LP series, I realized far too late that the original transcriptions had been recorded at 80 rpm.

A similar adjustment to LP playback speed will give the listener a truer reproduction of Bing's voice during that broadcast.

John Newton
August, 2008

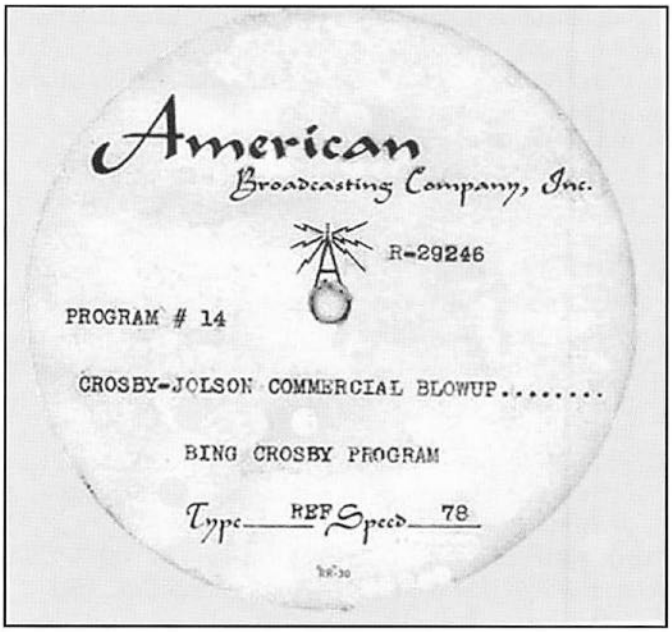
(Editor: Fascinating research by John. In other emails, he told me that he had come across some other items which were new to me at least.

While re-arranging some records I've had for some time, I came across something interesting about which I'd totally forgotten. These were filed within my Jolson collection (yes, I collect him also, along with a number of others.)

The discs are from Bing's Philco broadcast #14 (the singing Philco commercial blow up). You may already be aware of this; if so I'm sorry to waste your time.

Anyway, I was playing the early "bootleg" white label 78rpm of the singing commercial, wherein Bing hesitates and says to Jolson, "We're cooked..."

It turns out that this isn't how the blow up originally went and that Bing's comment of "We're Cooked..." was actually dubbed into that part of the pre-recorded broadcast at a later point.



Along with this bootleg I also had another record filed with the Jolson group that shed light on this "blow up". It's a 12-inch American Broadcasting Company reference disc of the commercial, and it's different.

On the ABC reference disc, after Bing hesitates there's a longer period of silence and following this Bing states - very clearly - "Where the hell are we?" ... followed by much laughter and Bing saying "we're cooked" rather distantly and almost inaudibly. The rest is all the same, but obviously the "Where the hell are we?" was edited out and/or overdubbed with "We're cooked...", this result leaving the spontaneity and humor of the blow up while removing language which simply couldn't be broadcast in the 1940's.

While trying to file the record properly (under Bing and not Jolson), I happened upon another 12-inch reference disc with the American Broadcasting Company label.

This one is two-sided. One side has the Elko, Nevada private recording Bing made (labeled "Elko County, Nev."). This is the recording that appears on a Broadway Intermission LP (#136) containing recordings "from Bing's personal collection". The reverse side has a blow up of "Pass That Peace Pipe" from an American Broadcasting recording session for Bing's pre-recorded Philco programs (there's no date, but it's obviously for either the broadcast for December 3, 1947 or December 17, 1947.) On this, Bing loses his way or something goes wrong halfway through the number and sings "Holy Jumpin' Jesus"... then the recording breaks down with some laughter and Bing again says "Holy Jumpin' Jesus" again at the end of the recording. Are you familiar with this one?

John Newton

(Editor: No, *I certainly wasn't familiar with it. Did other members already know about these discs or were they new to you too?)*

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries
Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Gord Atkinson, 14 Castle Harbour Crt., Ottawa, ON K2S 1B9, Canada.

Gord's *The Crosby Years* series remains available direct from him. US members can obtain the CDs for $16.00 US each which includes postage. With the strengthening of the Canadian currency against the US dollar, Canadian purchasers should now pay CAN $16.00 for each CD. Payment can be made by check or money order to Gord Atkinson. Please note that USA members may send US dollar checks.

UK, Irish and European members who wish to obtain the CDs should contact Malcolm Macfarlane. The CDs cost £10 each.

Arthur Blood, 597 Osmaston Rd., Derby DE24 8NE, UK (tel. 01332 735197)

Arthur offers a Cinema Showcase picture of *High Society* images. A4 size, in glorious technicolor. This is a limited edition of 50. Each one individually numbered. £7.50 each inc. postage to UK addresses.

Michael Crampton, address on inside front cover.

Michael has many spare copies of old issues of BING magazine and please contact him if you would like to pick some up for a nominal price. Also, there are still some copies left of the excellent book covering Bing's TV appearances.

Art Evans, 8445 Walker Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19136, USA. Telephone (215) 333-2678; E-mail Arthur.evans3@verizon.net

Wanted – Art is still willing to pay top dollar for the sheet music "WA-DA-DA" featured by Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys in 1928 with photograph of Bing, Harry Barris and Al Rinker on the cover.

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your NTSC requirements for Bing on DVD and video. See also www.FesFilms.com

Peter Long, Wynnstay, Pirbright Rd., Normandy, Guildford, Surrey GU3 2AQ, UK

"I have for disposal 14 issues of *Bingville News* by the Crosby Collectors Society from No. 9 (September 1984) to the final issue No. 22 (December 1987). All in good condition."

Please contact Mr. Long on 01483 811385 or email: wynnstay@gmail.com

John Marshall, 39 Kings Rd., Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0QD, UK (email: carson1812@blueyonder.co.uk)

Our enterprising friend, John Marshall, has more DVDs (PAL format) available in his Footloose series, as follows:

Footloose Follies – Christmas 2008, parts 1 and 2. This compilation features several Crosby moments, including his Hollywood Palace Christmas duet with Kate Smith from 1966. Price £10.

Bing on TV – Disc 1 includes Bing's 1959 Oldsmobile show with Jo Stafford and James Garner, Bing's 1957 colour Christmas show with Sinatra plus Bing's TV debut from 1954, with Jack Benny. Disc 2 includes a Hollywood Palace show with the Mills Brothers and Skitch Henderson, the Edsel show from 1957 and a 1962 Bing special featuring Gary Crosby and the Smothers Brothers. Each disc is £7.

Out Of This World, Eddie Bracken's Sinatra send-up movie from 1945, with Bing provding the voice; £7.

My Favourite Story, an audio CD in which some of Hollywood's top entertainers tell their favourite story, Bing included. £5.

Six complete Jack Benny TV shows, including Bing's guest appearance along with George Burns from March 1954. £7.

All prices include P&P in the UK.

The Record Centre, 43, Presthope Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4NJ, UK (Tel: 0121-476-9619, e-mail: Raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Mail Order only. Ray Purslow has always been a real supporter of the Crosby cause and for your Bing CDs, contact Ray.

Varese Vintage Records, 11846 Ventura Boulevard, Suite 130, Studio City, CA 91604, USA [Tel: (800) 827-3734 or (818) 753-4143, Fax: (818) 753-7596]

For a limited time Varese Vintage Records is offering a special discount for ICC members on the following Bing Crosby releases. These beautifully packaged CDs feature previously unreleased live versions from Bing's radio broadcasts. Some of the performances are similar to the way Bing recorded them, sometimes he gives a song a slightly different treatment, and in some cases these songs feature interesting duet partners. All of the CDs are mastered from original source materials for excellent sound quality.

Bing Crosby on CD: $9.99 each.

A Crosby Christmas: Christmas Songs 302 066 848 2

Bing Crosby When Irish Eyes Are Smiling 302 066 876 2

Crosby Classics: Songs From His Famous Radio Broadcasts 302 066 905 2 *(Editor: see Keeping Track)*

Bing Crosby on DVD $10.99 each.

A Little Bit Of Irish, Bing Crosby In Dublin, 302 066 638 2

Hosted by Bing, this scenic 1967 TV musical special filmed in Dublin, was presented as an affectionate tribute to Ireland.

Please order all titles from the Varese Sarabande Records web site (www.varesesarabande.com/) and mention International Club Crosby Special Discount.

Worlds Records, P. O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94947, USA (phone: 1-800-742-6663) http://www.worldsrecords.com/

Try this company for imported CDs from the UK and elsewhere.

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Crosby Clubs Around The World

The ICC is pleased to be associated with the following Crosby organisations.

Bing's Friends And Collectors Society,

Hobie and Cathie Wilson, 426 Park Place Drive, Petaluma, California 94954-6647, USA (tel. [707] 762-5570 - e-mail bingsfriends81@sbcglobal.net –

website: http://bingsfriendsandcollectors.org/crosbyhomeindex.html

Regular newsletters are issued.

The Australian Bing Crosby Club

Bob Neate, 22 Pakenham St., Blackburn, Victoria, Australia 3130. (tel. [03] 9877 1983)

The society has recently celebrated its 30th anniversary and it still has thirteen of the original members extant. Regular newsletters are issued and the society is holding a film night on December 16.

Internet sites:

Bing Crosby Internet Museum:

www.mcckc.edu/~crosby

A wonderful site which carries up-to-date news and has a lively discussion board. Not to be missed by those on the net.

www.BingCrosby.com

This site comes under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner

and contains rare photos of Bing, radio shows, recordings and great clips from Bing's films.

The Immortal Talents of Bing Crosby

http://www.geocities.com/crissi_n/bing.html

This is a most impressive web site maintained by our member, Crissi Newton. Well worth a look.

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OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

In Tune International, Flat 9, Milchester House, 12 Staveley Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 7JX, UK, (Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 1323 412698

e-mail: gerry@stonestreet13.freeserve.co.uk,

website: www.GnuDawn.co.uk/intune) Described as the magazine for lovers of the golden age of popular music, this excellent periodical contains 40 pages about nostalgic and easy listening music. Subscriptions, which cover six issues, are £18 for the UK, £22 for Europe and £32.50 for the rest of the world. Payment can be made by credit card.

Memory Lane, P. O. Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England. (www.memorylane.org.uk

e-mail: editor@memorylane.org.uk)

Memory Lane is a lively magazine specialising in music of the 1920s through to the 1950s. Although the emphasis is placed on British dance bands and vocalists of the 1930s and 1940s, *Memory Lane* also covers the American scene, jazz, big bands, personalities, music hall and variety artistes. Regular features on Al Bowlly - one of Britain's favourite vocalists. Published quarterly and attractively printed and presented, each edition includes exclusive articles by a team of world-class writers and journalists plus picture pages, CD reviews, readers' letters, discographical features and the advertisements that you will want to read. A *"must"* for 78 rpm collectors

Vintage Record Mart, 'Sarsden', Lower Common, Aylburton, Nr. Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 6DR, UK (Tel: 01594 842991)

This is a 32 page quarterly trading magazine for collectors of 78s. Annual subscriptions are UK £8, Europe £10.40, USA & Canada £12.20, Australia and New Zealand £12.80.

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, e-mail: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

Friends of Doris Day, c/o Dr. Sue Gökgör, 71 East Avenue, Oxford OX4 1XR, UK. eMail: suegokgor@aol.com

Started in 1997, The Friends of Doris Day is an International Doris Day appreciation club based in Oxford, UK - and the only Doris Day fan club in the UK. The club publishes three 32 page magazines a year, packed full of articles and information you won't find anywhere else, including memorabilia signed by Doris herself for auction or sale. Subscription is £16 for UK members, £21 (or equivalent in Euro or US$$) for Europe, £22 (or equivalent in US$$) for other countries.

The Deanna Durbin Society, c/o Denis Holland, 84A Wolverhampton Rd., Stafford ST17 4AW, UK (phone: 01785 213987).

Dick Haymes Society, c/o Roger L. Dooner, 2951 Tyler St., NE Minneapolis, MN 55418, USA, or Maurice Dunn, 16 Cradley Park Road, Netherton, Dudley West Midlands, DY2 9SR, UK

(web site: http://www.dickhaymes.com/dhsociety/index.html)

International Al Jolson Society, c/o John Wehrman, 1195 Hickory Hill Drive, Green Bay, WI 54304, USA (e-mail: JWWehrman@aol.com - web site: http://www.jolson.org/ - see also http://www.mikescaife.btinternet.co.uk/ for Mike Scaife's Scottish branch website)

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com , website: http://homepages.tesco.net/flias/)

Sinatra Music Society - Mrs. Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-317743). A bi-monthly magazine called "Perfectly Frank" is issued.

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 01 8212418)

International Andy Williams Appreciation Society, P. O. Box 5, Westerham, Kent TN16 1UE, UK

The club has been running since 1967 and membership costs £6.50 (UK), £7.50 (Europe) and $15 (USA). A quarterly newsletter is issued.

Books 'n' Bing

1. The Mysterious Montague

By Leigh Montville, published by Random House, hardcover, 320 pages; price: $26.00; ISBN: 978-0-385-52033-1 (0-385-52033-6)

Back in 2004 (BING#138, page 21), we printed an article by Bill Piccone about John Montague and now a book about "The Mysterious Montague" has appeared. This is what the publisher's web site has to say about it.

Montville writes the story of a 1930s character who suddenly shows up in Hollywood, dazzling stars such as Bing Crosby with an amazing golf game of strength and precision. When word of Montague's prowess gets out, thanks to Grantland Rice, the mystery about his life unfolds.

He was a 1930s golf legend and Hollywood trickster who adamantly refused to be photographed. He never played professionally, yet sports-writing legend Grantland Rice still heralded him as "the greatest golfer

in the world." Then, in 1937, the secrets of John Montague's past were exposed—leading to a sensational trial that captivated the nation.

From three-time *New York Times* bestselling author Leigh Montville.

John Montague was a boisterous enigma. He had a bagful of golf tricks, on and off the course. He could chip a ball across a room into a highball glass, and knock a bird off a wire from 170 yards—and when the big man arrived in Hollywood in the early 1930s, he quickly became a celebrity among celebrities. He lived for a time with Oliver Hardy (whom he could lift, one-handed, onto the country club bar) and played golf with everyone from Howard Hughes and W. C. Fields to Babe Ruth and his close friend Bing Crosby, whom he famously beat while playing only with a rake, a shovel, and a bat. Yet strangely Montague never entered a professional tournament, and in a town that thrived on publicity, he never allowed his image to be captured on film.

The reasons became clear when a *Time* magazine photographer snapped his picture with a telephoto lens ... and police in upstate New York quickly recognized Montague as a fugitive wanted for armed robbery. As Montague was indicted in the tiny upstate town of Jay, New York, hordes of national media descended and turned a star-studded legal carnival into the most talked about trial of its day – the trial of "the Mysterious Montague."

From the glamour of 1930s Hollywood, to John Montague's extraordinary skill and triumphs on the golf course, to the shady world of Adirondack rumrunners and bootleggers, three-time *New York Times* bestselling author Leigh Montville captures a man and an era with extraordinary color, verve, and energy. *The Mysterious Montague* is Leigh Montville's most entertaining achievement to date.

(Editor: Martin McQuade has news of two other books that feature Bing.)

2. Audition: A Memoir, by Barbara Walters, published by Alfred A. Knopf, hardcover, 448 pages, $29.95, ISBN: 978-0-307-26646-0

Two recent books by female show business icons feature reminiscences of Bing. Barbara Walters' memoirs contain the television hostess's recollections of her famous 1977 interview with Crosby which was aired on her third ABC Special. She recalls that it was a surprise. *The seemingly affable, easygoing Crosby turned out to be as strict and rigid a parent as one could find.* She, of course, was referring to his statement that it would be ***Aloha, on the steel guitar*** should he discover that one of his children was living in error with someone under his roof. It has always been my view that Crosby was taking a publicly hard stand against something towards which he would be more flexible in private. Walters was *flabbergasted* by what she called his *dismissive* statement. Nevertheless she has acknowledged the line's emphatic usefulness and has incorporated it into her professional career. *My producers and I still use that expression today if we want to get rid of someone on a show.*

She seems to hold Bing to a very high standard. *He seemed to have conveniently forgotten his own reputation as a philanderer in his younger days. But then he insisted that that was how he, a Catholic, had been raised, and how he knew of no other way to behave.* As if one is bound by one's youthful peccadilloes when offering parental guidance. However he emerges redeemed. *Still, in spite of his rigidity, which I daresay some people might agree with, I liked Crosby...I liked the way he told me he wanted to be remembered as "not a bad fellow who sang a fair song in tune most of the time." Most of all I liked the way he treated my mother.*

Walters' mother had been an ardent fan and she came along for her daughter's visit to the *magnificent estate*, Hillsborough, the site of the interview. Crosby's valet Alan Fisher took her mother on a tour of the mansion and prepared a special tea for them with buttered scones and sandwiches. Crosby and Fisher provided her mother every courtesy *during this magical time for her in California.*

Bing takes Barbara for a walk in the rain.

Walters was most impressed by Crosby's claim that he always asked for second billing and never wanted his name above the title. *That way, he said, if the film was a success, everyone would realize it was, in great part, because of him. But if the film failed, it would not be*

regarded as his failure. I thought that was very smart.

This provides solace to Walters whenever she reflects upon herself playing second fiddle to, say, Harry Reasoner or Hugh Downs. She reinforces the point. *Remember this the next time you see an old Bing Crosby film on television.* It is true that Crosby saw the wisdom of protecting himself with major co-stars and usually hesitated to have his name placed above the title. I am a trifle surprised, though, to find that this usually meticulous reporter has never noticed that rare indeed is the film that doesn't showcase the Crosby name as the most prominent. This is another example of Crosby's self – effacement being taken at face value.

Walters takes special pride in her conversation with Crosby, as witnessed by the many times she has shown excerpts during her retrospective broadcasts. *It turned out to be his last interview. He died six months later of a heart attack in Madrid, Spain after playing eighteen holes of golf.* (This claim can be disputed since Crosby subsequently gave interviews to the BBC and *Sixty Minutes*). Her fondness for the visit shines through at the end, thanks to a cherished souvenir. *After his death Alan Fisher sent me a pair of Crosby's eyeglasses. He said he thought nobody would miss them and that my mother might like to have them. She did.*

Martin McQuade

3. Home: A Memoir of My Early Years,

by Julie Andrews, published by Hyperion, hardcover, 352 pages, $26.95, ISBN: 978-0-786- 86565-9

Julie Andrews has just written her memoir and in it, she devotes a few pages to her American television debut *High Tor*. She recalls flying to Los Angeles in November, 1955. *The trip was pleasant enough, but it was a weird time in my life, almost a suspended moment... I landed at night in the vast, sprawling city...nothing like London or New York. I didn't know where I was in relation to the city, and I couldn't imagine how I was going to get around.* This anxiety was relieved by the friendship offered by composer Arthur Schwartz and his wife. *A dinner was held for me at their house in Beverly Hills. It was a big gathering and I was asked to sing a couple of songs from High Tor. Arthur played for me, and though I felt shy, everyone was friendly and appreciative.*

The rigors of the production were overwhelming for the film ingénue. Her age was somewhat enhanced to placate her co-star. *Bing had been told that I was twenty-four years of age – four years older than I actually was, because the producers felt (probably correctly) that he would have thought me too young for the role and would never have hired me. He was a pleasant man, relaxed and easy in his own skin.*

One moment is particularly highlighted in Ms. Andrews' memory. *One day David Niven visited Bing on the set and we sat together for a while. I listened as these two very attractive and charming men reminisced about their early years, and I have seldom laughed as much. They were very funny, and kept topping each other's stories, which were witty and outrageous.* It can only be hoped that someday the discreet Ms. Andrews may elaborate.

Although Ms. Andrews reveals, *I felt my performance was very stilted,* she observes that *Bing and I worked well together.* Their friendship extended beyond the soundstages. *I was just readying myself to go home for Christmas, when Bing asked if I would like to go to the Rose Bowl with him and his family to see an important football game. I thought he felt I might appeal to one of his older sons. I replied, "Oh, it's terribly nice of you, Bing, but I've got a huge amount of packing to do. I think perhaps I'd better stay and do that." He looked at me in total disbelief. "I have tickets in the owners' box and my sons will be there. It's the playoffs – almost the biggest game of the year." I looked at him blankly." Well, it's really lovely of you," I said." But honestly, I do have to pack." I was shy, and couldn't imagine what I would say to his sons, so I went home. What a dummy. What an experience that would have been."*

Ms. Andrews confesses that *High Tor was not a memorable piece, and received only lukewarm reviews.* Like Barbara Walters, though, she received a treasured memento. *Bing gave me a lovely pendant on the last day of shooting: a pearl- encrusted angel, inscribed "Julie, thanks, Bing."*

Julie Andrews with Bing on the set of High Tor

A glimpse into the extremely high regard in which Crosby was held in the mid –fifties is provided in an essay reprinted in a new book, *Time: 85 Years of Great*

Writing (Time Books, 2008). Entitled *The Kid from Hoboken,* author Brad Darrach reflects upon the Sinatra comeback and quotes a friend as saying, *He's got it made. He's come all the way back and he's gone still further. He's made the transition from the bobby – sox set to the Serutan set, and if he keeps on going like he's going, he'll step right in when Bing steps out as the greatest all – around entertainer in the business.* It is refreshing to imagine Sinatra waiting in the wings.

Martin McQuade

(Editor: Next it's over to Michael Crampton as he reviews the latest book from the prolific Richard Grudens.)

4. Stardust – The Bible Of The Big Bands

– by Richard Grudens, published by Celebrity Profiles Publishing, Box 344, Main Street. Stoneybrook. New York 11790. Tele (631) 862 – 8555 Email: celebpro4@aol.com. $39.95

Richard has written a compendious 704pp book that is sub-titled THE BIBLE OF THE BIG BANDS featuring the vocalists, the bands and the musicians. He weaves a collection of personal profiles into his narrative and through his intense love of the topic he has been fortunate to interview and befriend many great musical personalities. He looks at all of the big band leaders, their lead singers and their associated musicians and songwriters. The journey is an ambitious one but Richard succeeds in bringing this intensely musical period to life.

Richard's boyhood heroes were the bandleaders and vocalists of the thirties, forties and fifties and around 1980 he realised that many were disappearing from the face of the earth. Although the recorded work of his heroes was preserved, the personalities were fading away and so he started on a journey to interview many and his book reveals some interesting responses from so many famous people. In the book you will get comment from dozens of famous personalities including Bob Hope, Doris Day, Connie Haines, Guy Mitchell, Tony Martin and many, many more.

Richard suggests that Harry James was perhaps the most popular band leader ever and that Artie Shaw was undoubtedly the greatest thinking musician of his time. All the famous bandleaders' origins are explored and the whole narrative leaves you wanting to learn more about this golden age of popular music. You get some insightful comments from the great vocalists and where the famous person has died, Richard has a happy knack of learning about them from their spouses. This book is encyclopaedic covering decades of great music and you will want to discover more upon reading the fascinating careers of so many great musicians.

The book is profusely illustrated and you will find a photograph and profile of all the great bandleaders and their vocalists. The bands are listed alphabetically as are the singers and the narrative grips your attention as it leads through these great musical times. Kathryn Crosby introduces the book and the Frankie Laine had written an intelligent and moving foreword before his sad demise. I commend Richard's book to our members because it captures a unique and very important part of our musical heritage.

Michael Crampton

5. Images of America – Del Mar Fairgrounds

By Diane Y. Welch, B. Paul Welch and the 22nd District Agricultural Association, published by Arcadia Publishing, softcover, 128 pages; price: $19.99; ISBN: 978-0-7385-5822-6

The San Diego County Fair began in 1880 and it eventually evolved into the annual fair now hosted at the Del Mar Fairgrounds. Plans were made to have a permanent site for the fair and a racetrack in 1933 and it became a project for the Works Progress Administration created during the depression to provide employment. While the federal agency provided the seed money, the agency had none for buildings and infrastructure. Bill Quigley, an investor from nearby La Jolla, contacted Bing and the Del Mar Turf Club was formed to provide the grandstand and everything else that was needed. This book tells the story of the Fairgrounds through pictures and chapter 3 details Bing's involvement with several rare photos. A nice book and autographed copies can be obtained from www.dianewelch.com for $24.99.

Nelkane Benton

Judy Schmid interviews a very special Crosby lady.

It was lunchtime at the Paramount Studios commissary and Nelkane Benton was happy to share her love for Bing Crosby over salads and bottled water. "Bing! Frank! Bing! Frank!" Nelkane chuckles as she recalls the family 'discussions' about the two top crooners of her childhood. "I lived the early part of my life in the New York City area, and you either loved Bing or you loved Frank; and I loved *Bing*! My family members were constantly arguing about who was best!" It was in high school when her family moved to LA that Nelkane became a regular movie-goer, visiting "The Paramount Theater" a few times each week to catch the latest Bing Crosby film, often more than once.

Rube Wolf, The Paramount's manager who incidentally was in charge at The Orpheum where Bing performed in the late 1920s and early 1930s as a member of the Rhythm Boys, noticed that the 14-year-old was a regular. He finally asked, "I see you're a Bing Crosby fan; would you be interested in a visit to Paramount

Studios?" Nelkane barely contained her glee and Mr. Wolf promised that he'd call ahead and have a pass reserved at the guard's gate in her name in a few days. That would give her time to seek her mom's permission to visit her favorite movie star's workplace.

After hours of negotiations and meetings with school officials, Nelkane was given permission to take the day off from school and she proudly boarded the bus to Paramount Studios, alone, only to find out that Mr. Wolf had forgotten his promise to her – a broken promise that became this teen's luckiest adventure!

"What can I do?" thought the teen. "I've bragged to all my friends that I was going to meet Bing. I can't go back and face them a failure or a laughing stock!" So, determined that her pass would show up eventually, she sat and waited...and waited.

Her face lights up as she continues her story. "A fellow on a bicycle rode past the guard shack and noticed me. He actually rode by a few hours later, and saw that I was still there. He got off his bike, had a few words with the guard, and the guard called me over. "We've got a pass for you now." Nelkane was ecstatic. She'd finally get to visit a real movie studio!

"I picked up my pass and looked up at the man who'd been on the bicycle, and my heart stopped. The man was smiling and talking to me and I KNEW his voice, but I had no voice of my own with which to respond! It was BING!" A deep rumbling laugh pours out of Nelkane now: "There was the man I'd admired FOREVER, talking to me; telling me that any time I wanted to wander around, that I was to call his office and a pass would be waiting for me, as long as I didn't make a pest of myself. I remember I nodded vigorously as the man got on his bike, began whistling, and rode away."

Nelkane became a regular visitor at Paramount, careful NOT be 'be a pest', as Bing had warned, but making sure that Bing caught her waving and smiling when she visited.

"Perhaps I was a pest. Maybe that's what allowed me to double up and graduate high school at age 16. I was determined to become a record promoter. My mother insisted I get a college education, so at age 19 and sure I had all the college education I needed, I was ready for the 'big time'. I opened my own little office at the corner of Sunset and Vine and, determined to be a record promoter with ONE client in mind (and with the grace of God and of George Sherlock, Decca promotions director), I was able to get a meeting with Larry Crosby.

Nelkane again laughs at her memories of herself as a strong-willed and determined young woman. "I strode into Bing's offices, introduced myself to Larry, and said "I'm here to work. Where's Bing?" Larry, who looked me in amazement and admitted his being impressed by my knowledge of music of the Big Band Era and particularly of "all things Bing", said, "Let me talk to Bing. I'll think about it. I'll call you." Two days later, Nelkane was hired as record promoter for Bing Crosby Enterprises, an amazing feat for a 19-year-old woman and truly amazing for an African-American woman in those days. "I felt it must've been my destiny, but as Bing titled his own book, you have to "call me lucky," Nelkane admits.

Thus began a dozen years or so working for Bing Crosby, years Nelkane says were the best of her life. "Larry issued a press release on Bing's letterhead announcing that I joined the company, and Army Archerd even wrote an article in *Variety* about me! Imagine that!" Nelkane shakes her head in amazement. "Bing felt I would be an asset to his team and did Bing *really* need a record promoter? I mean, I'd walk into a radio station saying that I had Bing's newest record and would they consider playing it and they'd merely ask me to hand it over and they'd pop it on the turntable immediately!" But Nelkane picked up other skills while working for Bing. She'd attend Bing's films in order to gauge audience reactions, she visited the studio to deliver things to Bing he needed to review or sign. And she was asked to help promote Gary Crosby's career.

"Gary and I were basically peers. I'd met him early on when working for Bing. He was talented but struggled with his wish to be an individual and still reap the benefits of being Bing's son. I remember one time I'd gotten an agreement from a local DJ that he'd interview Gary live in the studio, spin Gary's record, and talk about Gary's future plans – and that he would NOT ask him about his father. However, the interview had barely begun when the DJ asked the amazingly foolish question of what it was like being the son of the world's most popular entertainer. I thought Gary was going to explode. The man had promised he'd not ask that, and it was the first thing he did ask. Gary finished the interview, but he was livid." Nelkane added, "Gary had acting and vocal talents, as I said, but Bing was like a Mount Everest Gary felt he needed to climb. Sometimes his temper got in the way of his better judgment." Her voice trails off as she shakes her head in sadness.

Sometime late in 1965, Bing's employees were told that he was closing down much of his business over the next year or two. He'd remarried and moved his family out of the LA area. There were no hard feelings and Nelkane said she landed a job immediately because of her immense experience working with Bing. "I KNOW he made a few phone calls on my behalf," she says.

People were often quick to poke at Bing's stature, she adds, even back in those days. When Bing married Kathryn, some grumblers complained about their age difference. Some of those same people brazenly asked Nelkane if she had been approached by Bing because of her own youth. Her jaw tightens in recalling the gossip. "Bing's marriage to Kathryn made him happy; he deserved happiness, and I was thrilled for him! And, no, he NEVER said ANYTHING inappropriate to me as a young woman *or* as a black woman!" Nelkane continues, "To this very day, I'll defend Bing's

generosity and his civility. He was kind, he was fair, and there wasn't a racist or sexist bone in his body. I saw how he treated other people. I learned how to treat people by seeing the example he set. Sure, he would pull back from some people and THOSE people were always the pushy, "what's-in-it-for-me" types of people – phonies! And Bing had no use for that type of person. But if you didn't fawn over him, if you worked hard and were a good person, Bing would be there for you, no questions asked."

Nelkane Benton.

Nelkane, who boasts of also having Irish and Native American grandparents, is married with a daughter and a granddaughter. She's been the Community Affairs Director at KABC radio in Los Angeles for 37 years. While she now only works part-time, she's constantly in contact with young people. "I've always got something to say or share about Bing," Nelkane says. "I point out Bing's videos on YouTube; I mention a good CD to purchase that showcases Bing's voice or a DVD of a favorite film so they can see his acting genius." Nelkane remains in touch with Bing's widow, Kathryn, and admits that when Bing died, she was in total shock. It's only recently that she's allowed herself to read Kathryn's books or Gary Giddins' biography of Bing.

Nelkane, who believes that Bing's legacy must be maintained, as we have the great talents of Shakespeare, Caruso, Beethoven, Goya – or Sinatra. "Bing and Larry were my mentors. Bing was kind, supportive, funny, generous, patient, and HONEST – there'll *never* be another like him. I'm blessed to have been so close to him. Truly blessed."

For more information on Nelkane, visit: http://www.kabc.com/Article.asp?id=346459&spid=651118.

Judy Schmid

The Radio Broadcasts of Bing Crosby, 1946 – 1954

David Currington spotted an interesting site at: http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~hollyr/portfolio/projects/instadiscs/bing.html

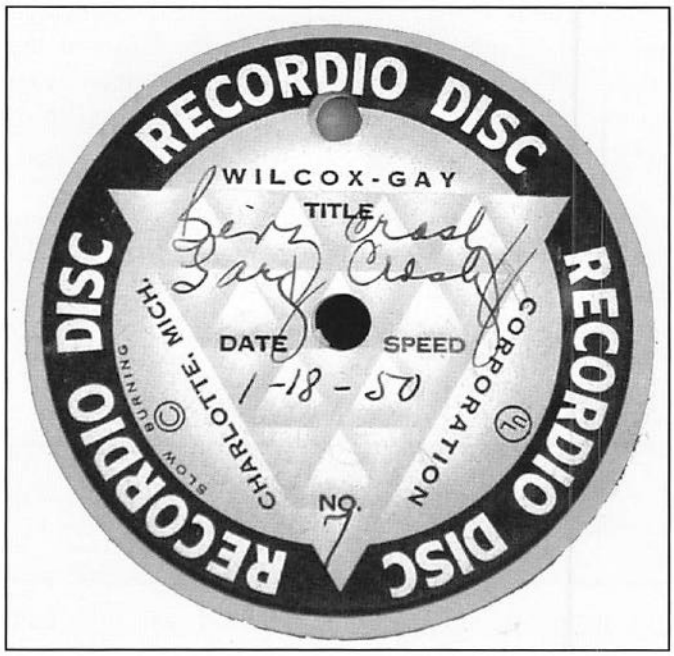
The School of Information at the University of Texas in Austin has a large collection of Bing's radio broadcasts on "instantaneous" discs in the Collection Deposit Library and they document his radio broadcasts from 1946 to 1954. **Holly Robertson** wrote a research paper in 2002 which contains the following comments:

"Between the soaring popularity of recorded sound of discs of the early twentieth century and the high-fidelity recording capabilities of magnetic tape achieved after World War II lies the brief but enthusiastic niche of the instantaneous disc. Developed in the 1930s and used well into the late 1940s and 1950s as an inexpensive and accessible method of recording, the instantaneous disc was different from commercially distributed records. The instantaneous disc – sometimes called lacquers, acetates, transcription discs, old time radio (OTR) recordings, Insta-discs, dubs, or reference recordings – was a "compromise of ease of engraving and playback life," composed of softer materials than mass produced phonograph records and thus more fragile and susceptible to the hazards of playback.

Three shows cover the time period of the instantaneous disc collection—the **Philco Radio Time** on ABC sponsored by Philco Radio and ran weekly for 30 minutes from 1946-1949. Next to come was the **Chesterfield Show** from 1949 to 1952, which also aired for 30 minutes weekly. **General Electric** sponsored another show documented in the collection which also aired 30 minutes each week

The collection of Bing Crosby radio broadcasts in the Collections Deposit Library consists of 661 ten inch discs and 11 eight inch discs. Five brands of instantaneous disc are represented: Wilcox Gay Recordio Discs (WGRD), Presto, Duodisc, Audiodiscs, and Recoton. Of these brands, there are 4 types of WGRD (black coated with a blue label; red coated with a blue label, black coated with a green triangle label, and red coated with a blue triangle label), 2 types of Duodiscs (black coated and orange coated), and two types of Presto discs (black coated with two holes and black coated with 4 holes). The bulk of the collection is recorded on black coated / blue label WGRD and black coated Duodiscs. Red coated / blue label WGRD are the third most prevalent disc types, and there are only a few

instances of the orange coated Duodiscs, the Audiodiscs, and the Recoton discs.



The discs are all have an aluminum base with a plastic outer coating – composed of either cellulose nitrate or cellulose nitrate. Without a chemical analysis (please see future plans for further discussion), I would speculate that the coating is cellulose acetate as the width is extremely thin and some of the records have a translucent orange or red coating. The black coated discs are noticeably thicker than the red or orange coated, and the Duodiscs are thicker than any other brand. Easily flexed, the discs are in remarkably good condition given their thinness, age, and the number of times and ways they have been transported and stored. The records are stored upright on wooden shelves in very acidic paper sleeves.

A single show is recorded on up to seven sides of a record—presumably each song has its own record side. In the old time radio circle, these discs may be known better as radio phonographs."

The site goes on to survey the quality of the various types of discs and reference should be made to the web address by those who wish to have further details.

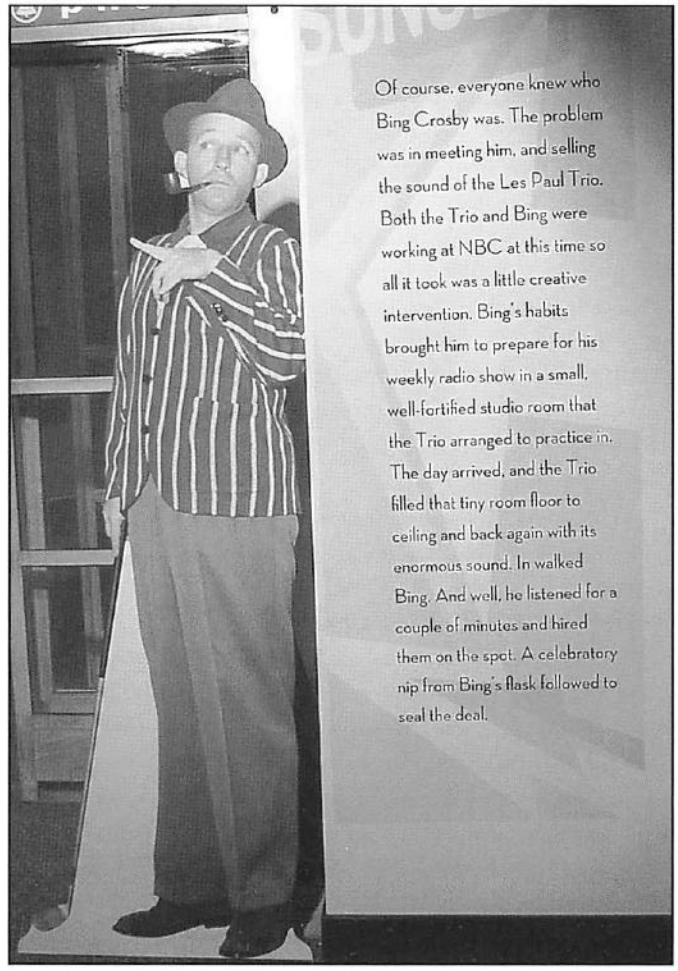
Les Paul's House of Sound

On a beautiful sunny, unseasonably mild Saturday, October 11th, I travelled to the shores of Lake Michigan in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to check out the Les Paul exhibit at Discovery World. "Les Paul's House of Sound", as it's called, opened June 21st and runs through the end of the year. This exhibit features items from Les' personal collection, including his original record cutting lathe and other Les Paul innovations dating back to his Waukesha (a Milwaukee suburb) childhood. It also includes recreations of Les' Los Angeles "garage," where he helped usher in a new era of music and sound in the 1940s and 1950s.

In addition, the exhibit uses the Discovery World audio and video studios to provide guests with an opportunity to "play" a virtual jam session with Les or receive a guitar lesson from him.

Our man is well represented, as he played a large role in Les' rise to fame, beginning with a guest appearance on Bing's Kraft Music Hall radio show, and a regular gig on the subsequent Philco Radio Time series. Not to mention their smash hit recording of "It's Been A Long, Long Time" sandwiched in between. As you wind through the various rooms which house the collection, you come face to face with a full color, life-size cut out of Bing! It was quite a shocking surprise to see. Next to Bing, the following words appear;

"Of course, everyone knew who Bing Crosby was. The problem was in meeting him, and selling the sound of the Les Paul Trio. Both the Trio and Bing were working at NBC at this time, so all it took was a little creative intervention. Bing's habits brought him to prepare for his weekly radio show in a small, well-fortified studio room that the Trio arranged to practice in. The day arrived, and the Trio filled that tiny room floor to ceiling and back again with its enormous sound. In walked Bing. And well, he listened for a couple of minutes and hired them on the spot. A celebratory nip from Bing's flask followed to seal the deal."


Of course, everyone knew who Bing Crosby was. The problem was in meeting him, and selling the sound of the Les Paul Trio. Both the Trio and Bing were working at NBC at this time so all it took was a little creative intervention. Bing's habits brought him to prepare for his weekly radio show in a small, well-fortified studio room that the Trio arranged to practice in. The day arrived, and the Trio filled that tiny room floor to ceiling and back again with its enormous sound. In walked Bing. And well, he listened for a couple of minutes and hired them on the spot. A celebratory nip from Bing's flask followed to seal the deal.

The life-size cut-out of Bing.

Several other 8 x 10 photos of Bing appear on various display walls, but the real highlights were seeing the Ampex tape machine that Bing gave to Les during the Philco show run. It's amazing in size...it could double for a wash machine! The other highlight was the guitar that Les used to accompany Bing on the aforementioned 1945 hit recording, "It's Been A Long, Long Time". It's on display, along with a gold record of the Les Paul / Mary Ford hit, "Vaya Con Dios".

One entire wall was filled with a color mural of Les with the many artists he's performed with over the years. It's an impressive lot, but Bing stands out first and foremost among the rest, in a full length pose right next to Les. The other performers only are portrayed in smaller head shot poses.

So if any of my fellow ICC members are planning on being in the Milwaukee area this month, I would urge you to check out this fine tribute to the father of the electric guitar, the immortal Les Paul. There's talk, based on its success, that the exhibit may be extended in to 2009.

Greg Van Beek

(Editor: The PBS documentary "Les Paul: Chasing Sound" shown in the USA in July reached BBC4 in the UK in October. At the end of a segment about Bing, Les Paul says: "I learned so much from Bing – Bing Crosby is probably one of the most talented persons I ever met." Well said, Les.)

Celluloid Crosby

It's that time of year again. December is the month when it seems right and proper to watch *Holiday Inn* and *White Christmas* without having to explain to unexpected callers just why you are watching Bing singing "White Christmas" on your television screen with the sun streaming through the window. Even if you settle down to watch *Blue Skies* or *The Bells of St Mary's* during the height of summer there's a possibility that the man from next door will pop round to borrow a cup of sugar just as Bing is in mid vocal flow with "White Christmas" or "Adeste Fideles".

Bing's strong filmic association with Christmas began in 1942 with *Holiday Inn*, and was briefly represented in 1945 and 1946 with *The Bells of St Mary's* and *Blue Skies*. In the first of those Bing, as Father O'Malley, sang "Adeste Fideles" with a boys' choir. For the second, "White Christmas" is included in a medley which strings together three Irving Berlin compositions in a scene towards the end of the film when Johnny Adams (Bing) is on a War Bond raising tour. Then, in 1954, Paramount's biggest musical moneymaker was released and *White Christmas* became the definitive Christmas movie.

Hollywood couldn't resist capitalising on Bing's association with the festive season. References to Christmas were shoehorned into a further two productions before Bing's big screen career came to an end. In those instances the Christmas footage could have been excised without the plot suffering. The films were made in consecutive years for Twentieth Century-Fox. The first, *Say One For Me* (1959) saw Bing back in dog-collar as Father Conroy. At the film's end a fund raising television show finds Bing in the unlikely vocal company of Debbie Reynolds and Robert Wagner singing "The Secret of Christmas". The following year he had equally unlikely vocal support from Fabian and Nicole Maurey when the trio sang "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" in a Christmas party scene. And so the cinematic image of Bing and Christmas came to an end.

It was following Bing's death in 1977 that Hollywood decided to licence Crosby's Christmas recordings. They provided soundtrack references to accompany the on screen depiction of the Christmas season. Well over a dozen different songs were used from 1978 to date. The following listing indicates where you can be reminded that in Hollywood Bing is Mister Santa Claus when the director wants to wrap his audience in the warm glow of Christmas:

- *F.I.S.T.* (1978) "Here Comes Santa Claus" emanates from a radio towards the beginning of this Sylvester Stallone/Rod Steiger story of an American labour union.
- *Some Kind of Hero* (1982) Richard Pryor starred as a Vietnam prisoner of war who knew it was Christmastime when the prison camp's public address system plays Bing and Carole Richards duetting "Silver Bells".
- *A Christmas Story* (1983) Three Crosby recordings helped to give a seasonal atmosphere to 1940's Indiana in a film which gave a young boy's view of Christmas. The songs were "Jingle Bells", "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town" and "It's Beginning to Look Like Christmas". The Andrews Sisters sang on the first two.
- *One Magic Christmas* (1985) This Canadian tear jerker starring Mary Steenbergen made audiences reach for their handkerchiefs when Bing sings "I'll Be Home for Christmas" at a time when it looked as though a family would shortly be made homeless.
- *Christmas Comes to Tattertown* (1988) "White Christmas" is featured in this thirty minute cartoon.
- *When Harry Met Sally* (1989) Everyone remembers the scene where Meg Ryan surprises Billy Crystal and assorted diners by making noises quite unassociated with mastication. When the plot reached the year end festivities set in 1987 we hear Bing singing "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas".
- *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* (1989)

Bing and Robert Wagner lead the singing of "The Secret of Christmas".

Chevy Chase is Clark W. Griswold in a film which seems to make the Christmas television schedules every year. Clever use is made of the Hawaiian Christmas composition "Mele Kalikimaka (Merry Christmas)" which Bing sings with the Andrews Sisters. It is Christmastime but Griswold is dreaming of a hot summer's day by a swimming pool when it is heard on the soundtrack.

- *Avalon* (1990) Avalon is a suburb of Baltimore and is the backdrop for mapping out the family fortunes of the Krichinsky family. Bing's soundtrack contribution is "Silver Bells" which he duets with Carole Richards.
- *Grumpy Old Men* (1994) It is Christmas Eve, 1992. Jack Lemmon's daughter, played by Darryl Hannah, tells dad her marriage is failing. Bing's Warner Bros. recording of "Winter Wonderland" is played to counterpoint to the unfolding story of marital discord.
- *The Troubles We've Seen* (1994) A Max Ophul's documentary about the war in Sarajevo contains footage of sledding in the Bosnian mountains which is accompanied by Bing's recording of "White Christmas".
- *Trapped in Paradise* (1994) The setting is the town of Paradise and the time is Christmas Eve. Nicholas Cage stages a bank robbery and the public address system serving the banking hall is playing Bing's recording of "Do You Hear What I Hear".
- *Mother Night* (1996) "White Christmas" is used when it is played in its entirety over the film's opening credit's sequence. Forty minutes later we hear it again. The film's leading man Nick Nolte explains that he has twenty-six copies of the 78 which he obtained from the U. S. Armed Forces.
- *The Myth of Fingerprints* (1996) This family drama is set over the Thanksgiving weekend. The plot brings surprises and revelations every five minutes or so. A lengthy excerpt from "Adeste Fideles" is heard on the soundtrack as another skeleton emerges from the closet (figuratively speaking, that is).
- *L.A. Confidential* (1997) "Mele Kalikimaka (Merry Christmas)" by Bing and the Andrews Sisters lets the

audience know it's around the Christmas period in a liquor store setting in 1950s's Los Angeles.

• *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) This Michael Moore compiled film is an anti-George W. Bush documentary. Three-quarters of the way into the film there is footage of U.S. military stationed in Iraq. It is just before Christmas, presumably in the year 2002. Bing and the Andrews Sisters can be heard singing "Here Comes Santa Claus" on two occasions during the sequence.

• *The Polar Express* (2004) Both "White Christmas" and "Here Comes Santa Claus" can be heard on the soundtrack of a film which uses animation in an expensive but effective way. Tom Hanks provides several voices to characters in a story about a boy who doesn't believe in Santa (at least until the film ends).

For me the real thing is still "Holiday Inn". You can play it every American National Holiday and it will be in season, so to speak. And if you purchase a copy on DVD make sure that it is Ken Barnes' remastered version with loads of extras and the new copy in colour!
Mele Kalikimaka!

Keith Parkinson

THE A-Z OF BING'S MOVIES

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT Film. In 1974 Jack Haley Jr. strung together musical sequences from M-G-M films to celebrate and promote the 50th anniversary of the formation of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Bing was engaged as one of the narrators and he introduced the song "Going Hollywood" from his 1933 movie together with "Well, Did You Evah" and "True Love" from *High Society* (1956). Or at least that was the case in the U.K. In the U.S.A. "True Love" was omitted.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT II (or TOO on some publicity material) Film. The first *That's Entertainment* made money. After all production costs were minimal. New material, which consisted in the main of narration or basic dance sequences, was filmed on the studio backlot with a minimum of production costs. Naturally a follow up was called for. Haley once more selected the musical set pieces for inclusion. This 1976 sequel contained no new Bing footage but did include two further song sequences from the films seen in the earlier compilation. They were "Temptation" from *Going Hollywood* (1933) and "Now You Has Jazz" from *High Society* (1956).

THAT'S FOR ME A Johnny Burke-James V. Monaco song. The Basil Rathbone character's song compositions were ghost written for him in *Rhythm on the River* (1940). Mary Martin arrives at Rathbone's apartment and she is asked to write lyrics for Bing's new untitled composition which she wrongly assumes has been written by Rathbone. She quickly dashes off the lyrics and sings "That's For Me" for Rathbone." Later when Bing and Mary are getting along well, he sings "That's For Me" to her claiming that he has written it. Miss Martin is disgusted by what she feels is a deception by Bing and storms off. Before long however the misunderstanding is cleared up and Bing and Mary enter into a song-writing partnership together.

THERE'LL ALWAYS BE A LADY FAIR Song. Bing never recorded this Cole Porter composition featured in the first Crosby *Anything Goes* (1936). Had he made a studio recording for Decca it is unlikely it would have bettered the soundtrack version. In the film Bing is joined by the Avalon Boys Quartet and the prominent voice of Chill Wills within the quartet plus Bing's interpolating vocals make it a joy to watch and hear.

THERE'S A FELLA WAITING IN POUGHKEEPSIE Song. As you would expect from the lyrics, this Johnny Mercer-Harold Arlen composition from *Here Come the WAVES* (1944) is really Betty Hutton's song in the film. She sings it as part of a stage show with Bing and Sonny Tufts joining in at the song's conclusion. Bing's Decca recording featured the Andrews Sisters.

THIS IS MY NIGHT TO DREAM Song. This Johnny Burke-James V. Monaco song is the most romantic of the ballads featured in *Doctor Rhythm* (1938). In a sequence set on the Honeymoon Ride at an amusement park Bing expresses his feelings to Mary Carlisle in song. The vocal chorus provided by other Honeymoon Riders make it a less than intimate experience.

Bing serenades Mary Carlisle

THIS IS THE ARMY, MR. JONES Song. In *Blue Skies* (1946) Bing sings an Irving Berlin medley to both entertain the troops and sell War Bonds. "This is the Army, Mr. Jones" was sandwiched between "Any Bonds Today" and "White Christmas".

THREE BLIND MICE Traditional nursery rhyme. Choir practice at St. Dominic's did not limit itself to hymns. When the Robert Mitchell Boys Choir was harmonising with Bing in *Going My Way* (1944) this ditty preceded "Silent Night" on practice night.

THREE LITTLE WORDS Song. The Rhythm Boys sang this on the soundtrack of the Amos 'n' Andy feature *Check and Double Check* (1930). On film however, the song is lip-synched by members of the Duke Ellington band and the Rhythm Boys are not seen. The song's oh so simple words and music earned a fortune for composers Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby.

TO SEE YOU IS TO LOVE YOU Song. The love ballad from *Road to Bali* (1953). Johnny Burke knew how to let Bing sing "I love you" without using those three little words. Music to Burke's lyric came from partner James Van Heusen. In the film the song receives a Crosby reprise when Bing uses it to calm a gorilla.

TOBIAS, HARRY (1895-1994) Lyric writer. Harry often worked with his brother, the better known Charles, but the one Bing film song in which he had a hand was "At Your Command", co-written by Rhythm Boys Barris and Crosby. The evergreen for which Tobias is best remembered is "Sweet and Lovely", which had music by Gus Arnheim and Jules Lemare, and which Bing first recorded in 1931, the same year as he waxed "At Your Command".

TODD, THELMA (1905-1935) Actress. Thelma Todd's penultimate film was *Two for Tonight* (1935). That same year she made *The Bohemian Girl*. Before that film was released she was found in a parked car - dead of carbon monoxide poisoning. No satisfactory explanation has been forthcoming regarding the circumstances surrounding the discovery of her body. To see her films from the first half of the 1930s would reveal the characters she portrayed were wisecracking types without a care in the world. In her only Crosby film she played Lily Bianco. Bing's real love in *Two for Tonight* was Joan Bennett but due to a misunderstanding, common to light hearted musicals of the day, Miss Bennett thought that Bing had fallen for Miss Todd when he is seen rehearsing a love scene for a play with her.

TOMORROW'S MY LUCKY DAY Song. When the Bing single "Straight Down the Middle" was released in 1958 it was coupled with a song written for a golfing short Bing made several years earlier. *Don't Hook Now* was produced in 1942 by Herbert Polesie and brother Everett and Bing's regular songsmiths Burke and Van Heusen were commissioned to write the only song included in that one-reeler. Bing sang it outside the Rancho Santa Fe clubhouse before teeing off.

TONE, FRANCHOT (1905-1968) Actor. Tone was second billed to Bing for *Here Comes the Groom* (1951). He played the millionaire Wilbur Stanley who looked destined to marry Jane Wyman until Bing reappeared on the scene and proved that charm prevailed over wealth. Tone and Crosby had received billing in 1942 for *Star Spangled Rhythm* although they did not share screen time together. By 1951 Tone's film career was winding down. He had peaked in the late 1930s. In 1937 he was placed 7th in the list of Hollywood's top box-office stars. Between making movies Tone was busy sharing the marriage bed with actresses Joan Crawford (1935-1939), Jean Wallace (1941-1948), Barbara Payton (1951-1952) and Dolores Dorn-Heft (1956-1959). Rather than end his acting days by lending his name to whatever exploitation pictures wanted his services he chose to appear in quality productions. Hence he only made five films in the 1960s, the best one being *Advise and Consent* (1962), in which he played the American president. He died of lung cancer.

TOO MUCH HARMONY Film. The review in *Variety* called it "a backstage story without even the suggestion of a new idea." Bing played a Broadway performer who spotted Judith Allen when she was part of a small time vaudeville act. They fell for each other. Complications arose because they were already involved - Judith Allen with Jack Oakie and Bing with Lilyan Tashman. Joseph L. Mankiewicz was responsible for story and script. He was a self confessed Crosby fan and one of his after dinner party pieces was to give a passable impersonation of Bing. He'd worked for Paramount since the silent days and in 1929 his name was attached to the film *Close Harmony*. The plot of that film bears a passing resemblance to *Too Much Harmony*. In an interview published in the *New York Times* dated 24th May, 1950, Mankiewicz revealed that he did not get his own way as far as the finer detail of the plot was concerned. He had been summoned to the office of Paramount production chief Emanuel Cohen on the morning of July 3rd, 1933. Shooting was to commence that day when he was informed that Cohen objected to Mank's original plot which depicted Bing initially falling for Lilyan Tashman. Bing was already seen as having an audience out there which expected him to behave in a certain way. Tradition required leading men to be wooed by the girl. Cohen wanted Bing to conform to the highest standards of American manhood. Mankiewicz obliged and carried out a hurried re-write which allowed Miss Tashman to make the first romantic advances. Despite *Variety's* thumbs down the public loved the film when it opened in New York at the Paramount and broke the theatre's box office record. That record had been set three months earlier in the June of 1933 by *College Humor*, Bing's first Paramount

picture under a three year contract with the studio. By July *Too Much Harmony* had begun a six week shoot. With its release Bing was being increasingly sought out for press interviews. In September of 1933 he told a Los Angeles newspaper, "I don't want stardom. At least not in *Too Much Harmony.* If a picture flops, they always want to blame it on the star and I haven't enough to do in that picture to justify me taking the responsibility. No, I don't want to be starred and have everyone ridiculing me." The studio heads were unconcerned about Bing's reservations. By then he was already *Going Hollywood* which had commenced production on August 30th.

TOO ROMANTIC Song. Bing's main romantic ballad from *Road to Singapore* (1940) by Johnny Burke and James V. Monaco was duetted with Dorothy Lamour and then performed solo. That latter version was particularly effective with Bing shown on board ship pining for Dottie. Lamour made her own studio recording of the song as did the then Crosby wannabe Frank Sinatra.

TOP O' THE MORNING Film. The law of diminishing returns had set in when Bing and Barry Fitzgerald were paired on film for the third time. The thin plot concerned the stealing of the Blarney Stone. The two people interested in its recovery are local police sergeant Fitzgerald and American insurance company investigator Bing. Ann Blyth played Fitzgerald's daughter and provided the obligatory love interest. It was nothing like as successful as the Crosby-Fitzgerald team's triumphs in *Going My Way* (1944) or *Welcome Stranger* (1946). The 'Radio Times Film and Video Guide' described it thus: "Slim musical heavily reliant on the charm and charisma of its diametrically opposed stars. Rather tired and formulaic." One of the exhibitors in the U.S.A. who submitted his own review following the film's rental was the manager of the Majestic Theatre in Clear Lake. He commented: "He (Bing) will be an also-ran if they don't come up with a good one for him soon." The film clearly failed to do the expected business out in the sticks, where audiences were thought to be less discriminating. It played for two midweek days in late February at the Vacaville Theatre in Vacaville, California. The manager there called it "another Crosby dud. Bing had better come up with a good one pretty soon or even his old standby customers are going to look somewhere else for entertainment." Bing's last film of the 1940s, his most successful decade, came at a time when his personal showbusiness tide was turning. Record sales would taper off. Listeners to his radio shows would increasingly turn to television, the same medium that would siphon off cinemagoers. Since 1944 Bing had topped the 'Motion Picture Herald's' list of top ten box office stars. In 1949, when *Top o' the Morning* was a late summer release, Bing was displaced at the top of that list by Bob Hope. And 'Harvard Lampoon' placed two recent Crosby films in their list of the worst films of 1949. They were *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and *Top o' the Morning.* Who should take the blame for this Crosby misfire? Well, Bing personally selected David Miller as director of *Top o' the Morning.* Groucho Marx recommended him to Bing. Miller had just completed what turned out to be the final Marx Brothers' film. It was *Love Happy,* the least revered of all the Brothers' films. When 'Film Daily' reviewed *Top o' the Morning* at the time of its release they mysteriously rated Miller's direction as "suitable". The general opinion regarding *Top o' the Morning* seems to be not one of Bing's better lightweight musicals.

TOP O' THE MORNING Song. Not the catchiest Johnny Burke-James Van Heusen film title song but worthy of study because of the Irish accent adopted by Bing. During pre-production the film was known as *Diamond in the Haystack* which would have required some ingenious rhyming couplets from Johnny Burke when he came to fashion a title song. We first hear "Top o' the Morning" sung by Bing during the film's opening credits. Bing later whistles and sings the song when he has a lead regarding the whereabouts of the stolen Blarney Stone. Finally, the film reaches its happy conclusion with Bing, Ann Blyth and Barry Fitzgerald singing it before "The End" hits the screen. There was a fair chance that moviegoers found the song going around in their heads when they departed the auditorium.

Keith Parkinson

And The Bells Rang at Wesleyan

Martin McQuade is almost ubiquitous. This time, he tells us about his adventures in Connecticut.

The Bells of St. Mary's rang out in Middleton, Connecticut on July 30th 2008 as Wesleyan University's Center of Film Studies screened the final selection in a series entitled *Ingrid Bergman and Her Hollywood Leading Men.* The center, which is the repository of the Ingrid Bergman archives, is headed by Jeanine Basinger, whose recent book *The Star Machine* reveals a keen appreciation of Crosby's film career. (My review appeared in the spring, 2008 issue of *BING.*) It was my distinct honor to be invited by Professor Basinger to introduce this inspirational classic.

Notorious, Casablanca and *Gaslight* had preceded *Bells* in the month-long survey, with Crosby taking his place alongside fellow Bergman co-stars Cary Grant, Humphrey Bogart and Charles Boyer. A handsomely assembled exhibition of posters and photos was on display in the center's lobby. Among the treasures was an original Italian lobby card advertising *Le Campane di Santa Maria.* This was flanked by three stills from the movie and a printed excerpt from Bergman's

autobiography *My Story* detailing the notorious osculatory prank which the two stars played on the mortified clerical on-set consultant during the filming of the final scene. Program notes were available which offered historical information and this wonderful tag line from RKO's publicity department: *The Bells of St. Mary's is a movie on "The Sunny Side of Your Heart."*

Martin in front of the Notorious poster.

It was my privilege, thanks to arrangements made by Ms. Basinger's assistant Lea Carlson, to view Ingrid Bergman's personal copy of the shooting script given to her by director Leo McCarey. (Wesleyan is also home of the McCarey archives.) The red Morocco leather bound volume, with *Ingrid Bergman* embossed on its cover and the title on its spine, is dedicated *To Ingrid with deep appreciation and fond memories – Leo.* The completed date for the script appears as February 14th, 1945 and its 131 pages are interspersed with several photographs. One is captioned *Leo rehearses kindergarten children for nativity scene* (this is most intriguing since it includes children not seen in the picture); another reads *"Bing's birthday party on set with prop men, George Gabe assisting."*

Mr. Scott Higgins, a resident film historian, introduced me to the capacity audience of almost four hundred. My overview, entitled *Bing Crosby: an Abiding Screen Presence* began with the premise that *Bells* came at the pinnacle of his illustrious film career; the rich tapestry of which was then examined by tracing the many threads running through it. Attention was paid to the unique placement of the film within McCarey's oeuvre and the special impact upon *Bells* of David O. Selznick and Sister Mary Benedict, McCarey aunt who served as a model for Bergman. Notice was made of the film's ethereal dignity.

The film's dramatic effect was heightened by McCarey's decision to use very limited camera movement and tight close- ups, such as those which fill the screen during the final moments as the faces of the two stars are stripped bare of all artifice and become exalted before our eyes. Something rare and sanctified was captured here– the state of divine grace that only self sacrifice and forgiveness can achieve. The film remains to this day a most beatifying experience.

My peroration attempted to explain the star's eternal appeal. *Crosby once dismissed the praise he received for his portrayals of Father O'Malley saying "I was only playing Bing Crosby with my collar turned up." Where did the real Bing Crosby end and the screen incarnation begin? It didn't matter. He was an authentic fiction, as distinctive and textured as Chaplin's The Little Tramp, fueled by extraordinary powers of expression. In him we had a dear and valued friend who invited us to share his pocketful of dreams, cast off our cares and woes and just go fishing. Like his colleagues in the Hollywood Pantheon of stars, there was no gap separating him from his public. As a sage observer once remarked He was us and we were him, but he had the voice.*

The lights dimmed as the carillon began and the audience settled in for a silver screen demonstration of this magical charm. The rapturous applause at the film's end revealed how enthralling it remains.

Martin McQuade

The Bob Hope Estate Auction

An auction of some of Bob Hope's property was held by Julien's in Beverley Hills in October and looking through the catalogue we noticed some letters from Bing to Bob.

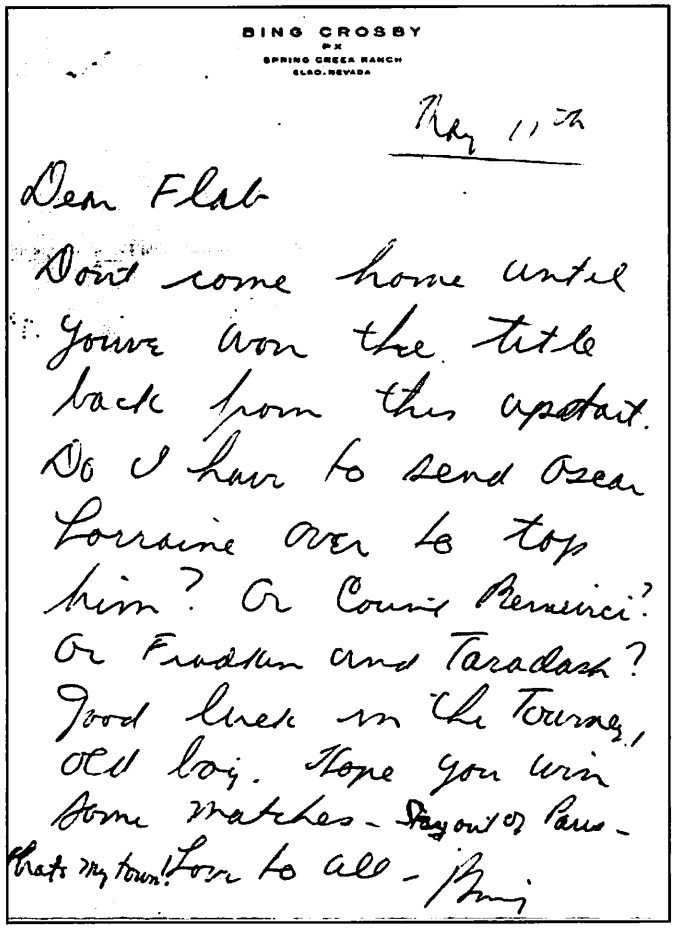
The first one is from Bing at his Spring Creek Ranch in Elko, Nevada and is dated May 11, 1951 when Bob was setting off for Europe on an extended tour which would also enable him to play in the British Amateur Open Golf Championship. With the letter Bing enclosed a press cutting of an item about Danny Kaye being named the uncrowned king of British vaudeville following a recent appearance at the London Palladium. We can't be sure of the spelling of some of the names but the hand-written letter seems to read as follows:

Dear Flab

Don't come home until you've won the title back from this upstart. Do I have to send Oscar Lorraine over to top him? Or Council Berneirci? Or Fradkin or Taradash? Good luck in the Tourney, old boy. Hope you win some matches – Stay out of Paris – that's my town!

Love to all,

Bing


BING CROSBY
PX
SPRING CREEK RANCH
ELKO, NEVADA

Dec 11 '61

Dear Flab

Don't come home until you've won the title back from this upstart. Do I have to send Oscar Lorraine over to top him? Or Council Berneirci? Or Fradkin and Taradash? Good luck in the Tourney, old boy. Hope you win some matches - Stay out of Paris - that's my town! Love to all - Bing

The letter sold for $5120!

The next letter is typewritten and is from Bing at his Rising River ranch and dated December 2, 1961. Bing was often concerned about Bob's work load and was always encouraging him to take a break now and again. This letter seems to have these sentiments in mind.

The reference to the picture is *The Road From Hong Kong* and Norman was of course Norman Panama, the director.

Dear Bob:

My partners in the hotels at Las Cruces and Palmilla were in touch with me recently, and they told me they hadn't heard anything definite from you with regard to what your intentions were about joining the fishing club we've formed up at Las Cruces.

Bob, I certainly don't want you to have anything to do with this if you don't think you're going to be able to use it. It's not very expensive, but it is a piece of change, and there's no use tossing it out the window.

I do think you'll have some fun there, as will Tony or any other members of the family, or anybody that you'd take along as guests. The fishing is absolutely great – particularly in the late spring months, but almost all the year around they can guarantee you marlin, and there are all kinds of small fish who put up an exciting fight and give you a lot of fun.

The accommodations are very pleasant, and the food is good. We have planes flying in there two days a week, and I think when you really have the urge to get away from it all – even the telephone – you'd extract some real benefit and pleasure out of it, but, as I say, don't do it unless you think you're going to have time to make use of it.

Have Jack or your secretary let me know what your decision is just as soon as you can as we're closing up the lists.

Haven't heard a word about the picture since I left England, but I guess Norman is busy with his little pinking shears, making a large drama out of the editing.

Had a letter from Snideman, and he told me that you and he played golf recently, but he didn't disclose the outcome. I'm sure if you played like you played in England, you must have brought him in real crisp.

I'm up at the ranch just now, but hope to get down there before Christmas for a little bit of golf. Will give you a ring –

As ever,

Bing

What was it Bob said on one occasion? "Fish don't applaud." I'll bet Bob did not take up Bing's offer to join the fishing club.

The letter sold for $1024 and the auction as a whole raised $601,000 for charity.

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN

Members were very complimentary about Mark Steyn's article in our last issue and he has now given us permission to reproduce the following which appeared on his web site www.steynonline.com at the end of September.

Steyn's Song of the Week #102
by Arthur Johnston and Johnny Burke

Johnny Burke was dubbed by his fellow lyricist Sammy Cahn "the Irish poet", and like many Irish poets he enjoyed a tipple. It ended his career, and eventually his life, a couple of decades ahead of his principal collaborators and equally prodigious drinkers, Jimmy Van Heusen and Bing Crosby. But in the twenty or so years he was at his peak, Burke produced a catalogue of songs that puts him in the very top tier of lyric-writers. He was born one hundred years ago this week - October 3rd 1908, in Antioch, California - and hit his stride around his 30th birthday, writing classic ballads, rhythm

numbers, comedy novelties ...and the all-time greatest animal song:

But if you don't care a feather or a fig
You may grow up to be a pig.

The title of that Crosby hit from 1944 catches the Johnny Burke style: To modify Oscar Wilde, a lot of drunks are lying in the gutter, but few of them are swinging on a star. Burke dealt in a lot of conventional Tin Pan Alley imagery - the stars, the moon, the heavens - but the celestial stuff was lightly worn:

Would you like to swing on a star?
Carry moonbeams home in a jar?

Come again? Carry moonbeams home in a jar? That's one of those potentially perilous images that few writers could pull off. Years and years ago, I wrote a little comedy sketch featuring a fey hippy chick called Carrie Moonbeams, and the actress playing her said, "Wow, what a great name! Where'd you come up with that?" "Oh, you'll figure it out," I said - and sure enough, a few other folks have found inspiration in Johnny Burke's lyric over the years. It's one of those goofily memorable phrases (like "reindeer games" in "Rudolph") that only a popular song can embed in the language. Burke's words swung among the stars but without ever losing their footing. Take "Moonlight Becomes You":

You're all dressed up to go dreaming
Don't tell me I'm wrong
And what a night to go dreaming
Mind if I tag along?

The casual conversational throwaway - "Mind if I tag along?" - is just lovely set against the lush flow of the melody.

Burke grew up in Chicago, played piano in the orchestra at college, and then joined the Irving Berlin Company as a song plugger. He was teamed with an up-and-coming composer called Harold Spina and in the early Thirties they wrote, among other things, some wonderful novelty songs for Fats Waller - "You're Not The Only Oyster In The Stew" and "My Very Good Friend, The Milkman". Then Hollywood called, and Burke hooked up with Jimmy Monaco to write songs for Bing Crosby's pictures: "Pocketful Of Dreams", "An Apple For The Teacher", and a number whose title is the very definition of Bing's deceptively careless ease, "That Sly Old Gentleman From Featherbed Lane".

Burke had original ideas and unusual imagery, but he hadn't yet found his voice for love ballads. That came in 1939, courtesy of the bass player for Bing's brother, bandleader Bob Crosby. Bob Haggart had written a tune for the band's trumpeter Billy Butterfield to blow the hell out of, and it went down so well that it occurred to Bob Crosby he might have another "And The Angels Sing" on his hands. That's to say, Ziggy Elman, Benny Goodman's trumpeter, had written a nifty tune, and Johnny Mercer had put words to it, and "The Angels Sing" had cleaned up on the hit parade. So Crosby took the little instrumental, which Haggart called "I'm Free", over to Mercer, and asked him to write a lyric. Mercer worked on it for two months but couldn't get beyond:

I'm free
Free as a bird in a tree...

Etc. So Bob Crosby then gave the tune to Johnny Burke, and with it a great piece of advice: Keep it conversational - "something like 'What's new?', 'How's things?', that kind of thing". Burke knew enough not to look a gift horse in the mouth:

What's New?
How is the world treating you?
You haven't changed a bit...

It's an instantly familiar situation: Two old lovers running into each other on the street, and making small talk. We hear only one end of the conversation, that of the party for whom the small talk isn't small at all:

What's New?
Probably I'm boring you...

Probably. And then as the melody plunges down to the last line:

Of course you couldn't know
I haven't changed
I still love you so.

"What's New?" served Bob Crosby's purposes, and closed the deal with brother Bing. Johnny Burke was now house lyricist for the world's most popular singer. On the second of Bing and Bob Hope's *Road* pictures, Burke was paired with a new composer and began the most important partnership of his career. Jimmy Van Heusen had started out in life as Chester Babcock until one day, working on the radio in Syracuse, New York, he was told by the station manager he needed a better name on-air, and looked out the window to see a shirt manufacturer's truck parked outside.

Johnny Burke (right) at work with Van Heusen.

So "Jimmy Van Heusen" became a Hollywood composer, and "Chester Babcock" was affectionately kept on as the name of Bob Hope's character in the *Road* movies. It didn't really matter what either Van Heusen or Burke was called: Once they formed their partnership, they were a two-headed creature called Burke-&-Van-Heusen that wrote as one and drank enough for ten. "Every man wants to be Sinatra," Sammy Cahn once said. "Except Sinatra. He wants to be Van Heusen."

The composer liked booze and broads, and, if the latter interfered with the former, he moved on. The day Van Heusen died I spoke to Cahn about him, and had a hard time getting Sammy to see beyond the awesome number of notches on Jimmy's bedpost to focus on the music. A composer who apparently never needed any enduring love of his own wrote some of the most enduring love songs for everybody else, and Burke provided him with lyrics that are modest, and rueful, and touching, and whose understatement makes the tune perfectly bewitching. "But Beautiful" is one of the greatest:

Beautiful
To take a chance
And if you fall, you fall
And I'm thinking
I wouldn't mind at all...

BUT BEAUTIFUL
JOHNNY BURKE
JAMES VAN HEUSEN
BING CROSBY · BOB HOPE · DOROTHY LAMOUR
and the ANDREWS SISTERS
"ROAD TO RIO"
JOHN H. TROUP MUSIC HOUSE, INC.
BURKE AND VAN HEUSEN, INC.

Or:

Have you ever felt a gentle touch
And then a kiss
And then and then
Find it's only your Imagination again?
Oh, well...

That "and then and then" is very nice. As Burke wrote:

Hide your heart from sight
Lock your dreams at night
It Could Happen To You...

In the Forties, it happened to Crosby and Burke and Van Heusen with effortless ease: "It's Always You", "Like Someone In Love", "Polka Dots And Moonbeams"...

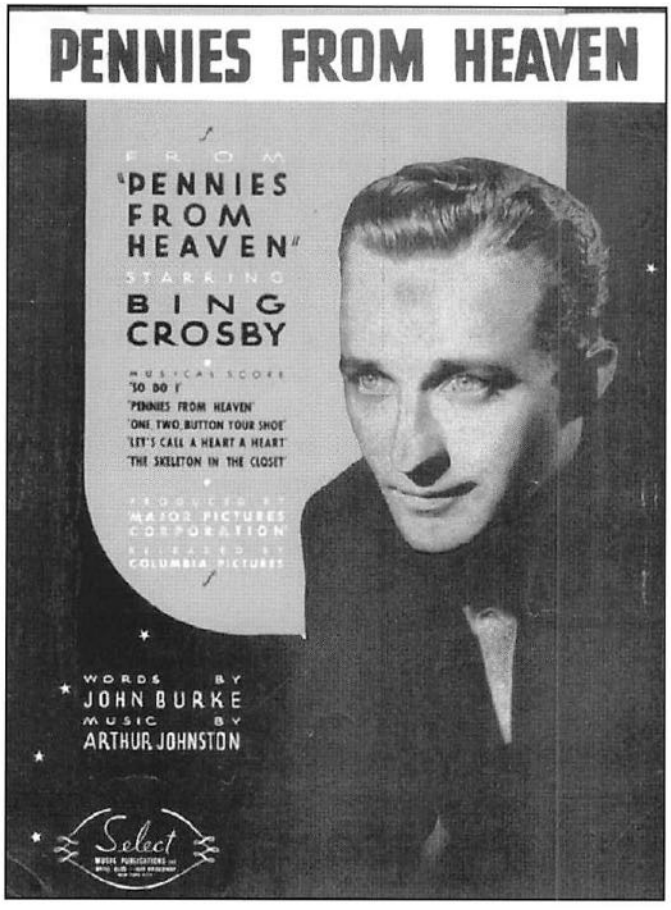
Burke wrote 25 film scores for Crosby and gave him six number ones. But come the booze, nothing could be done, and when Bing and Jimmy Van Heusen reckon you're drinking too much, that's the gold medal in the liquid Olympics. Crosby told Burke to quit boozing or else, and Sammy Cahn said to me that, around the same time, Sinatra had determined to bring him and Van Heusen together. One day, at Frank's behest, Sammy was round at Jimmy's pad, getting to know him, kicking around some ideas. "Suddenly the doorbell rang," said Cahn, "and Johnny Burke came in. For a lyric writer that's like being caught with somebody else's wife." There was one last Burke & Van Heusen ballad, the best of all, written for a Broadway flop called *Carnival In Flanders*. Why would anyone write a show called *Carnival In Flanders* and not expect it to flop? Title-wise, it's up there with *Springtime For Hitler*. But among the rubble was Van Heusen's all-time favorite song, with a wonderfully tentative opening from Burke:

Maybe
I should have saved those leftover dreams
Funny
But Here's That Rainy Day...

Did Johnny Burke have leftover dreams? After a final hit - the words to Erroll Garner's tune "Misty" - the last ten years weren't so much a rainy day as one long drought, ending with his death at 55 in 1964. Meanwhile, Van Heusen and his new partner Cahn became the signature songwriters for the reborn ring-a-ding-ding swingin' Sinatra: "Come Fly With Me", "All The Way", "The Tender Trap"... In his book *The House That George Built*, Wilfrid Sheed writes that Kathryn Crosby mentions a letter Frank wrote to Bing shortly before his death, expressing concern over Jimmy's drinking. "I know," she said with a smile, "I know." As Sheed puts it, "Any one of them could have written the note about any of the others." But by then the fourth hard-drinking musketeer, Johnny Burke, was a long time in his grave.

At his best he was up there with the very top of the top tier. But, if I had to pick a song to toast him with on this centenary, I'd go for his first real hit for Crosby, the title tune of a long forgotten picture from 1936. Arthur Johnston, a musical stenographer for Irving Berlin, wrote the melody, and Burke came up with a marvelously simple lyrical idea. Another "Rainy Day", but this time a cause for celebration:

Every time it rains, it rains
Pennies From Heaven
Don't you know each cloud contains
Pennies From Heaven?



Regis sings it on "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?", presumably because they couldn't get the rights to the Cole Porter song. But, in fact, there's something quintessentially American in finding sunshine in the rain. Who needs a silver lining when the good luck's all in the precipitation?

You'll find your fortune falling
All over town
Be sure that your umbrella
Is upside down...

In the Seventies, the British TV playwright Dennis Potter used the song as the title for a BBC drama set in the Thirties. Characters were wont to break into song - or, rather, into mime, mouthing along with hits of the period: "Pennies From Heaven", "Roll Along, Prairie Moon", "The Glory Of Love", usually in insipid versions by mediocre British dance bands. The idea was to contrast the illusions of the songs with grubby reality, and it proved such a goldmine for Potter he flogged the gimmick unto his death in the Nineties. Those Brit telly critics who hailed him as a genius used to refer airily to "Dennis Potter's *Pennies From Heaven*", a formulation which always irked me. After all, he'd never have been able to mock it in his own writing (he referred to the Tin Pan Alley songs that had so enriched him as "vomit") if Johnston and Burke hadn't written it for real in the first place. And to me that's the greater achievement. Popular song is a miniature art form but one that, at its best, reaches the heights - a penny soaring into heaven, swinging on a star:

So when you hear it thunder
Don't run under
A tree
There'll be Pennies From Heaven
For you and me.

Mark Steyn

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Kathryn leads Nevada Day parade

On November 1, Kathryn Crosby led the 70th Annual Nevada Day parade in Carson City. Nevada. The theme this year was *Hollywood in Nevada — Movies and Television.*

The *Nevada Appeal* in its advance report on October 15 stated:

"The Silver State has played host and backdrop to a number of big and little screen endeavors for 111 years. The first production filmed there was in 1897 when the heavyweight prizefight between "Gentleman Jim" Corbett and British challenger Bob Fitzsimmons was captured for posterity in a ring where the Carson City Sheriff's Department now stands. Kathryn Crosby, widow of crooner and actor Bing Crosby and an actress and singer in her own right, is this year's Grand Marshal and will lead the parade of dozens of floats and marching bands from across the state in front of thousands of onlookers.

Crosby, 74, lives in Genoa with her husband of eight years, Dr. Bill Sullivan. Neither she nor her husband have ever attended the parade, though they've lived in the region since 1986, she said."

Some of the other TV shows and movies filmed in the Carson City area include *Bonanza* (1959), *Charley Varrick* (1973), *It Could Happen to You!* (1999) (TV), *Honkytonk Man* (1982) *Cadillac* (1989), *The Shootist* (1976) and *Showgirls* (1995).

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters received since the last issue

Perry Huntoon, Naperville, IL

Another fine edition of BING. I was particularly impressed with Greg Van Beek's detailed listing of Bing's film promotional recordings. Issuance of these in a chronological CD series would be a great counterpoint to the Jonzo/Sepia series of Bing's commercial recordings. Is there any chance that the ICC could undertake such a project or persuade a record producer to do so?

I was also grateful to see the reprint of Mark Steyn's article, "Where the Blue of the Night." Steyn is a terrific writer who, until recently, wrote fascinating articles each month about recently deceased personalities for *The Atlantic*. He made a good point when he stated that "When a star that bright [Bing] dims so quickly, it's usually because the keepers of the flame aren't any good at keeping it."

Couple that statement with Nathaniel Crosby's ideas for promoting Bing as stated in Michael Bamberger's fine article in the same issue. But, as stated, "the licensing of the Crosby name is controlled by Kathryn Crosby, who has her own ideas." Kathryn has gotten a late start compared to those who have promoted Sinatra and Presley from the moment of their passing, if not before. It may be much too late for Bing even with the establishment of bingcrosby.com. It seems ironic that, when clicking on that website, Bing is heard singing, "Spring may be a little late this year." Well, it's the publicity that is coming late, but perhaps, better late than never.

At least the ICC is keeping the flame alive. Thanks for all you do.

Roger Addey, Camborne, Cornwall, UK

I am writing to say how sorry I was to hear of the death of Ralph Harding. I had known him for many years, as I am sure have others, and he was very kind to me and helped enormously to improve and swell my collection of Bing's songs. I have many letters from him, all painstakingly typed on his machine. Also I have many copies of the radio programmes of KMH, Philco, Chesterfield and other various shows, giving details of other stars and songs. These must have taken him many hours of work, and I have often had to refer to them for information, and they make interesting reading.

He came down to see me and my wife a few years ago, to collect some 78's he wanted for someone, stayed the night and drove back the next day! I have a very nice photo of Ralph with Diana taken on another of his trips in 1991, as they stopped off for coffee near Newbury, when I lived in Reading. He was a great guy and will be sadly missed, and I offer my condolences to his family.

I notice in the BING # 149 page 46, that *High Tor* has surfaced again. Is there any chance this might have been put on DVD? It is such a good film with excellent music. My DVD copy, although not good, at least I can watch and listen!

I hope this is a prelude to a revival of Bing's music, as I am pleased to read that the Crosby family, has at last realised what a truly great man Bing was and is, and I hope they can really promote his music again, and maybe save the world! !.

The magazine is excellent and I find the various pages filled with very interesting reading.

(Editor: It would be nice to have 'High Tor' issued on a professional DVD and let's hope this happens one day.)

Tony Peverett, Chichester, West Sussex, UK

Firstly I would like to say how sad I was to hear about Ralph Harding. I used to subscribe to the *Crosby Collector* magazine and I still use Ralph's wonderful *Road to Bing Crosby* discographies including the V-disc supplement. Indeed it was due to him that I was able to obtain my only rather worn V-disc of Bing singing "White Christmas". He also obtained tickets for members to see Bing's TV show, at Shepherd's Bush studios I think, where he sang "White Christmas" live – fantastic!

Do you have a caption for the excellent cover photo in issue #149?

(Editor: Unfortunately we don't know when and where the photo was taken and if anyone can help us, it would be much appreciated.)

Charlie Campbell, Dundee, Scotland, UK

A good friend of mine, Charles Cowdery, died on July 9. He was 90. He was a well known collector from London in the early days and had a hand in putting together one of the first discographies of Bing. He was a keen member of the ICC until ill health forced him to give up.

Tom Bertino, San Francisco, USA – by email.

We've never corresponded before, but I am one of the Bing faithful from the San Francisco bay area and a member of the Club. Being 49 years old, I suppose, makes me one of the puppies of the group(!).

I recently felt that I deserved a treat, and at last availed myself of a copy of "Bing Crosby Day-By-Day." I just had to write and say a loud THANK YOU for such a wonderful book. This is something I don't really do much at all, but you've produced a real masterpiece

here...an obvious labor of love which I can hardly see ever being surpassed.

It has enabled me to finally pin down my own personal Crosby memories and experiences, for which I'm grateful...it's useful to me, for example, to place the day that I met the man and sat in on one of his rehearsals the day before Elvis Presley's death and three days before Groucho's. (Think of it; I actually lived at a time when giants walked the Earth!) But beyond that, all the little details, particularly the at-the-time reviews of performances and records...well, it's all so wonderful to have all this information so conveniently collected. And it's served what is probably the best purpose: to send me back to my own Crosby collection to rewatch a film that rarely makes it to the top of the pile, or to hear again a lesser-played record, and to consider, and to gain a greater appreciation.

I could go on forever about how spectacular I find your book to be, but I trust the accolades should be old-hat to you by this time. Just know I'm very grateful to you for your Herculean effort, as all true Crosby fans, and anyone with an interest in popular culture, should be.

(Editor: Perhaps a little immodest of me to publish this but it was such a nice email! The book remains available from Scarecrow Press, Barnes & Noble or through Amazon.)

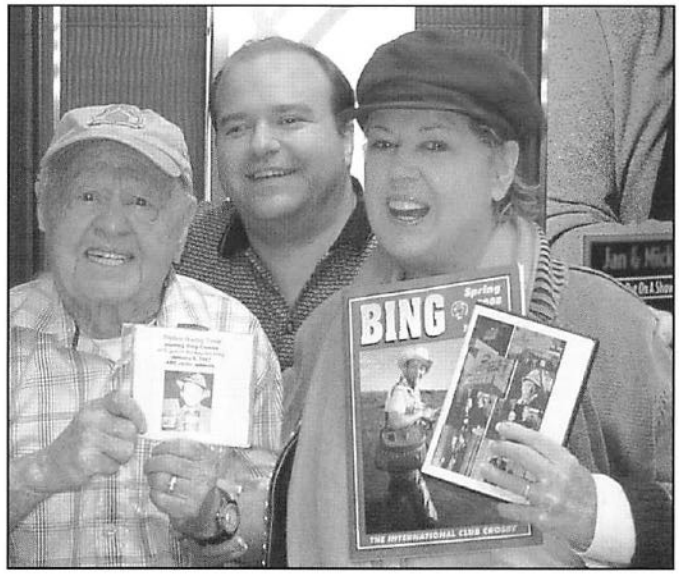
Mickey Rooney meets Greg Van Beek

Let's allow Greg to tell us the story.

On September 28th, I journeyed 120 miles south to Chicago to attend the semi-annual Sharon & Ray Courts Hollywood Collectors & Celebrities Show at the Marriott O'Hare Hotel. I was especially looking forward to the trip this time, for one of the main attractions was a true Hollywood legend, Mickey Rooney. Mickey is one of the last links to Bing's movie hey day. A man who, along with Bing, was among the top box office draws during the late 1930's and early 1940's.

Just days before I met him, Mickey celebrated his 88th birthday, and hearing stories of how the years were definitely taking their toll on his memory and demeanor, I didn't know quite what to expect. But, armed with a complimentary copy of BING magazine, a CD of the January 8, 1947 Philco Radio Time show, and a DVD of the January 4, 1964 Hollywood Palace TV Show (both of which were hosted by Bing and featured Mickey as guest), I waited in line to meet this icon. He arrived, with his wife Jan, about an hour late, but sat down and got right to work signing autographs for adoring fans.

When it was my turn in line, I extended my hand to shake his, but before I could even introduce myself, he shook his head emphatically no. I thought to myself, oh boy, here it comes. Maybe what I've heard about him being difficult is true. He quickly said "let's bump fists instead." OK, that was certainly a different greeting! As I explained a little about the ICC, I presented the magazine, CD & DVD to him, which he promptly handed to his wife. She seemed genuinely pleased with them, while Mickey more or less remained quiet, concentrating on signing the photo I brought along of Judy Garland and himself, from the 1941 MGM film *Babes On Broadway*. I also had him sign the booklet from the 4-CD Rhino box set of songs from the Mickey and Judy films, which featured a beautiful color photo of the pair, taken on the set of the 1940 MGM film *Strike Up The Band.*



Greg with Mr. & Mrs. Rooney

I was hoping to coax a story or two from Mickey about his working with or spending time with Bing, but it was apparent that his 'powers of recall were a bit atrophied', to borrow a line Bing once used. After posing for a photo, with Mr. & Mrs. Rooney holding the magazine, CD, and DVD I'd just given them, his wife Jan thanked me again for the gifts, and then had a surprise gift of her own for me... an autographed tour program for their "Let's Put On A Show!" stage show! It's chocked full of wonderful photos from Mickey's incredible 85 year career in show business.

As we parted, Jan offered one final comment; "Bing is our favorite....we both love him!" which pleased me very much to hear.

I also had a chance to meet up again with Bing's co-star from Paramount's mammoth 1946 Technicolor musical *Blue Skies*, Karolyn Grimes. She showed me a nice colorized photo of herself, at age five, seated next to Bing at the piano during the '(Running Around In Circles) Getting Nowhere' number. She offered to autograph it for me, and we shared a laugh as she asked me "Now what was my name in that movie again?" For the record, it was Mary-Elizabeth. We both reminisced a bit, marveling that it had been ten years since we first met. Time indeed marches on.

One last stop before I left the show was to meet actor Leslie Nielsen. While his career goes back to the late 1940's, I couldn't find evidence of his path ever crossing with Bing. However he did star in some latter-day comedy classics, which are among my favorites; *Airplane!* and *The Naked Gun* series.

Despite the 40-mile stretch of road construction, it was an enjoyable trip to the 'windy city'. It's not everyday you have the opportunity to meet a living legend like Mickey Rooney!

Greg Van Beek

Vaudeville at the Brooklyn Paramount

Martin McQuade was honored last April when he was invited to present a paper at Long Island University.

On April 25, 2008 Long Island University, site of The Brooklyn Paramount, played host to a seminar honoring the theater's great Vaudeville tradition. A highlight of the day was the screening by Ron Hutchinson of The Vitaphone Project of recently discovered silent home movies filmed by Rudy Vallee when he headlined at the theater in 1930. Professor Michael Hittman of The Brooklyn Paramount Museum Project invited me to join a panel discussion and to deliver a paper chronicling the sensational engagements which Crosby, Vallee, and Russ Columbo enjoyed here. Among those seated on the dais were TV and radio host Joe Franklin, *The Nighthawks Orchestra* leader Vince Giordano, and Boswell Sisters specialist David McCain. During a reception following the event Mr. McCain shared with me a condolence letter which Bing sent to Vet Boswell soon after her sister Connee died in October, 1976. It contained in longhand an open expression of the abiding love which Bing had for his friend, and a tender reminiscence of the nicknames the two had for each other during the Kraft Music Hall days - *Brother Bingstance* and *Sister Constance*. The title of my presentation, *Crosby, Columbo and Vallee - at The Brooklyn Paramount*, was inspired by an obscure 1931 novelty tune.

Crosby, Columbo and Vallee - at the Brooklyn Paramount

There's lots of public enemies, but I know only three.
Crosby, Columbo and Vallee.
They've made a million married women wish that they were free.
Crosby, Columbo and Vallee.
Those crooning vagabonds are stealing all our blondes,
Now I know what has become of Sally;
And ev'ry time you kiss your girl, who is she thinking of?
Crosby, Columbo and Vallee.

Copyright by Al Dubin and Joe Burke 1931

This 1931 song gives a hint of the spell cast by Bing Crosby, Russ Columbo and Rudy Vallee when they performed at The Brooklyn Paramount. Here was one of the major stages where these legendary troubadours pioneered the art of popular singing and minted the template for the musical idol which has become a mainstay of our popular culture.

The Brooklyn Paramount opened its doors on November 24, 1928, right at the cusp of a technological revolution. It was at this time that talking pictures were new; and the worlds of broadcasting and recording were transformed by the introduction of the microphone. The theater was the first expressly equipped for sound. Electronic amplification enabled vocalists to sing intimately and ushered the age of the crooner. The first was Gene Austin. His amiable singing was on display at The Brooklyn Paramount the week of September 27th, 1929.

Another early crooner was Rudy Vallee. In 1925 he formed his own band. Vallee at first was hesitant to sing, thinking that his tenor voice was too thin and nasal. He compensated by using a megaphone, a cone – shaped device which intensified and focused the voice. The microphone soon made the megaphone obsolete and Vallee's sweet fastidious singing won favor.

In 1929 he appeared throughout New York on the Keith vaudeville circuit. He was a hit throughout the chain, except when his tour ended at The Albee Theater, just a short walk from here. The singer recalled in his autobiography, they received us courteously but their fervor was restrained. There are few out – and – out smashes in that borough. Brooklyn (and I say this with great affection) is a country unto itself.

Rudy Vallee

The situation changed when he was booked in May 1929 for ten weeks at five shows a day alternating with the first run movies at the New York Paramount, the showplace of the Publix circuit. Police were called out to maintain order while flappers mobbed the appearances of the personality known as "the voice with a sob in it." Vallee was concerned when the management decided to move him to The New York Paramount's sister theater, The Brooklyn Paramount.

After six weeks they shifted us (no recriminations) to the Brooklyn Paramount and, remembering the Keith –Albee hauteur, I was a little worried. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise, a chance for me to learn the fine art of really running a show. I was to emcee the whole program, which ran approximately an hour; direct the augmented orchestra of twenty pieces, gag with the acts, set the tempos, and then eventually step forward for my own spot.

Many people have wondered how I could be way over in Brooklyn at a theater, broadcast from the Lombardy Hotel, be back at the next show in Brooklyn, and up to my night club The Villa Vallee for dinner and fulfill all these engagements without splitting myself into three or four people. I have had to take some terrible chances in driving in order to make the various performances and I feel proud of the fact that I have never missed a Paramount show or a broadcast.

Vallee traveled to Hollywood once this successful booking at The Brooklyn Paramount came to a close. He reflected *when I left for California, I said "Goodbye" to the Paramount Theaters for a while, and it certainly felt strange to wake up in the morning and not wonder if I had overslept and missed the first show!*

Vallee returned to The Brooklyn Paramount in December, 1929. On December 5th he made headlines when he visited the Brooklyn Post Office between performances to campaign for early mailing of Christmas gifts and letters. In 1930 Vallee headlined a show at The Brooklyn Paramount called *College Rhythm*. He was joined by powerhouse Ethel Merman, whose appearance led to George Gershwin casting her in *Girl Crazy*. This launched her fabled Broadway career.

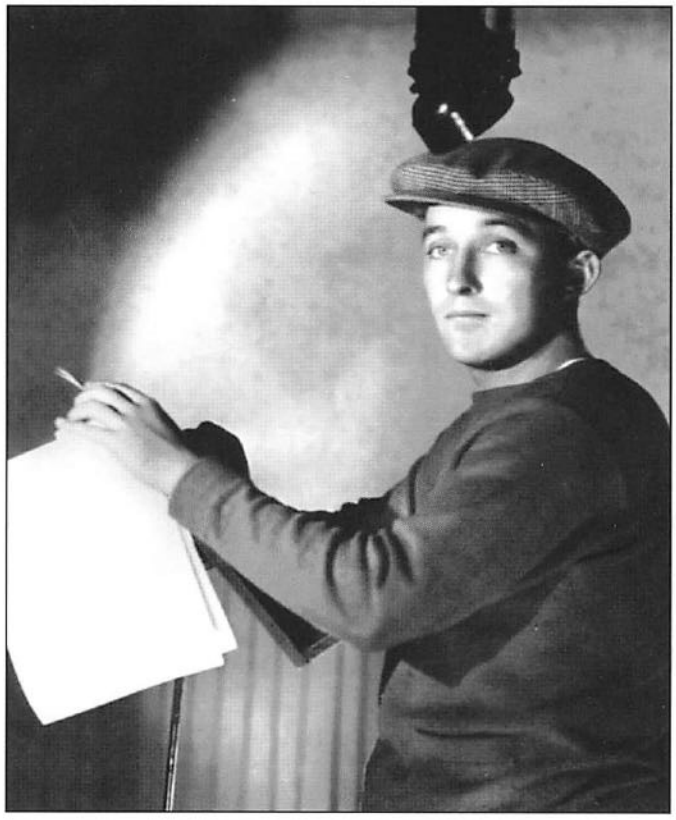
Rudy Vallee was the first to acknowledge that his heyday was over once he heard the voice of Bing Crosby. As a boy, Crosby could not stop singing. It poured out of him. In 1926 he joined the band of Paul Whiteman, "The King of Jazz," where he developed his vocal skills. In 1930 Crosby joined the Gus Arnheim band, headquartered at The Cocoanut Grove nightclub in Los Angeles.

By the time Crosby embarked upon a solo career in 1931 he had shed the tenor range. He understood that the microphone favored baritones. Crosby assimilated many different styles, ranging from classical to jazz, and fused them into a unique sound which accounted for his meteoric rise.

It must have resembled a ceremonial passing of the torch when Rudy Vallee introduced Crosby at his debut at The New York Paramount Theater on November 6, 1931. He remained there for a record breaking three months, ending on February 11, 1932. Immediately afterwards he began an engagement at The Brooklyn Paramount for six weeks at five shows a day, from February 12 until March 24, 1932. He was paid the then staggering salary of four thousand dollars a week. This was a prolific time for Crosby in New York. In between his shows in Brooklyn during the film screenings Crosby traveled to Manhattan to wax some of his most classic recordings: St. Louis Blues" with Duke Ellington and "Shine" with The Mills Brothers; and his signature ballads, "Starlight" and "Paradise."

In his autobiography Crosby recalled his time at The Paramount theaters. *I was used as a master of ceremonies. I sang a song or two, worked in with some of the specialty acts, or did straight for visiting comics. Being an emcee turned out to be rather a merry assignment. I found I could be quite the gabby fellow. I'd always been fascinated with words and their meanings.*

Often Crosby was presented singing off stage or in half darkness or silhouette. There would sometimes be as many as three microphone set - ups so that he could roam the sprawling stage and serenade from different positions.



The young Crosby at work

The theater's press office enthusiastically heralded his appearances with great ballyhoo. *Brooklyn's first chance to hear him - Bing Crosby, the Rhythm Boy who made good! An indefinite stay. He's hot! He's Torrid! He's your favorite torch singer of songs you love. Everybody will*

like Bing, a regular fellow.

Held Over! Bing Crosby, to satisfy the demands of thousands, singing the love songs that are thrilling a nation!

Bing Crosby! Third Big Week! His Own Show, Written By Himself. The fourth week's bill of fare advertised *Bing Crosby in "Time Goes By," a program of musical songs.* The fifth week: *Have a fling with Bing in Big Whoopee Show!* And then, *Extra Farewell week! Come Thrill to "Bing" as he cuts loose with his hottest rhythms in the final and best show of his sensational engagement!*

Thirty eight Bing Crosby films had exclusive engagements at The Brooklyn Paramount. The first was "The Big Broadcast" which featured Street Singer Arthur Tracy who headlined at the Brooklyn Paramount the week of September 27th, 1932.

Crosby was known as 'The King of The Crooners" but one singer posed a threat to his throne. His name was Russ Columbo.

In 1930 Columbo found work as a violinist with Gus Arnheim's orchestra. Columbo was used as a standby vocalist when Crosby was unable to perform. When Columbo became the band's permanent singer, he began to model himself after his predecessor.

Russ Columbo in his hey day

A zealous agent Con Conrad persuaded Columbo that perhaps he could rival Crosby's ascendancy. He arranged for his client to sign recording and radio contracts with Crosby's competitors. A publicity bonanza was fueled, and "The Battle of the Baritones" began. The crooners' combat intensified when Bob Weitman, manager of both Paramount theaters, booked Columbo into the Brooklyn Paramount. This clever maneuver deliberately coincided with Crosby's engagement at the New York Paramount. Columbo opened at the Brooklyn Paramount on November 26, 1931 and played there for ten weeks, until February 10, 1932. The newspaper ads touted the initial program *as a gala anniversary show crowning the achievements of three years as Brooklyn's leading theater.* Sharing the bill during his run were Frances Faye, The Boswell Sisters, The Mills Brothers, and George Burns and Gracie Allen.

There was great hoopla for Columbo: Russ Columbo: *There's Only One Place To See Him.; Heralding Greater Entertainment than Ever Before; The Romeo of Song Back by Popular Demand.*

The bill of fare for Christmas week 1931 included an eight member female dance troupe, which had just shared the bill with Crosby at The New York Paramount. One of these was Grace Bradley, a well known movie actress in the thirties and the widow of William Boyd, better known as "Hopalong Cassidy." She recently graciously shared by telephone some of her memories of those halcyon days at what she called "the awe inspiring" Brooklyn Paramount. *The audience reaction was always very good. I don't remember any tearing of clothes or anything like that. The crowds weren't riotous like the bobbysoxers later on. Russ was so good looking, with a great voice. He was much more a romantic type but Bing was the one I was crazy about.*

She recalled the grind of playing vaudeville in her native Brooklyn. *I was doing so many shows that I was losing two pounds a day. It was a matter of life and death! There wasn't much relaxation. You didn't even have time to eat. When you start in the morning and work until midnight – it gets to where you don't have any personal life. You just exist!*

As soon as his Brooklyn Paramount engagement ended, Columbo replaced Crosby at the New York Paramount, just as Crosby began his stay at The Brooklyn Paramount.

Taking advantage of their overlapping engagements at both theaters, the two singers occasionally swapped appearances, rushing on the train to substitute for each other to the delight of their respective fans. This arrangement gained Crosby the title, "The Subway Crooner."

Soon the mock feud ceased as the careers of the two singers diverged. Columbo's life came to an end on September 2, 1934 when he succumbed to a wound from a bullet accidentally fired from an antique pistol. He was twenty six years old. Crosby, who was one of his pallbearers, went on to dominate the popular culture for successive generations.

When The Brooklyn Paramount opened it was at an historic juncture as the twilight of vaudeville turned into

the dawn of mass media culture. These trailblazing stars rose to the occasion at this landmark in the heart of the old theater district where for the price of a quarter Depression - ravaged audiences could find fleeting sanctuary from the turbulent times and enjoy the frivolity and majesty within its hallowed walls

Who always sing about a couple neath the stars above?
Crosby, Columbo and Vallee
And though I call it madness they insist that it is love.
Crosby, Columbo and Vallee.

Martin McQuade

LEEDS 2008

Bob Halls sends his report on this year's gathering.

What timing! At the time of writing, just having returned to Suffolk after attending the 43rd Annual Dinner & Meeting of the International Club Crosby and being invited to compile this year's report, I pulled up Sunday's Russell Davies programme on BBC Radio 2 for company whilst writing this report, only to find that this week's programme was dedicated to Johnny Burke and featured Bing consistently throughout the programme.

So to Leeds! What a day! Seven hours of sheer delight, served up by maestro **Malcolm Macfarlane** and the tireless **Michael Crampton**. What a team!

Nearly forty people attended the day, were promised surprises and were not disappointed. We even had live radio coverage from BBC Radio Cumbria, the presenter picked for the occasion, having once interviewed Bing.

Well that's the appetiser, now for the main course, hopefully in some form of chronological order. However my apologies now for any inaccuracies, as concentrating on note taking from 3pm to 10.30pm tested my stamina, taking me past the time when I normally fall asleep, dribbling in the armchair.

This was only my second attendance and at the tender age of 56 years, I suppose I must be regarded as one of the young upstarts, in Bing terms. Consequently I feel a bit overawed compiling this rendition, having been in the company of members, not only much senior to me, but with such vast knowledge and experience of Bing. So bear with me as I try to blend and respect the wisdom of the past with an interpretation from a slightly younger perspective.

Malcolm had put together a very professional PowerPoint display incorporating songs from Bing's 1953 General Electric shows to entertain us as we arrived in dribs and drabs. Then with strains of 'Where the Blue of the Night' filling the room, the 43rd meeting of the 72 year old club began.

As is customary, those attending all stood in silence for members sadly no longer with us, including **Raymond O'Toole** from Ireland, at the meeting only last year, but taken suddenly whilst on his home turf. Also **Eric Jackson** and **John Teale**. Unfortunately, each year we hear of members passing on for a singsong, or round of golf with Bing, a sad consequence of the passing of the years.

Michael then welcomed newcomers, something I appreciated tremendously last year, as this year we greeted **John Robinson** and **Paddy Gilley and his wife** from Ireland, as well as previous attendees from across the water in the shape of **Gun Damo and Ole Meistrup** from Denmark, **Jeremy Rose** from the South of France and **George O'Reilly** a veteran member and personal friend of Bing, from Ireland.

Tributes were then paid to Michael and Malcolm, with a warm round of applause for their continuing work for the club and preparation for this event, with a special presentation being made to Michael, by **Ken Crossland** of an album featuring photos from past gatherings over the years, for his 43 years of work on our behalf.

Michael distributed copies of the latest Sepia CD, 'Bing Crosby Through The Years', Volume 2, and the splendid 2009 calendar as well as acknowledging a collection of Bing photos, sent by **Ron Bosley** for sale to members for club funds.

Malcolm then launched into what can only be described as an unmissable show! With endless clips of unseen material and professional presentations which took the breath away until the final minutes of the conference. It started with a PowerPoint presentation, depicting Bing the man, the singer, the actor, radio presenter and sportsman, described by Malcolm as 'An Injection of Crosbyana'. I hope he reproduces this for the magazine, as it gave details and figures of Bing's achievements, which make rather impressive reading indeed.

There followed a recording of a message to club members and fans from Bing's daughter, **Mary Crosby Brodka**, which I believe was very encouraging, and perhaps reassuring for some, me included. Mary came over as sincere and appreciative of our efforts to keep Bing's memory alive, mentioning in particular **Malcolm and Michael, Wig Wiggins, Ron Bosley, Arthur Blood, Stan White, Bert Bishop, Trevor Wagstaff and Ken Crossland** and making quite a poignant comment, that over the years since his death, the family had, in keeping with her dad's profile and character, kept things fairly low key, it being 'Dad's way'. But she mentioned the relatively new official Bing website and seemed genuinely anxious to show that the family were really onboard in promoting Bing's music and career. Wouldn't it be lovely to see her over here with her brothers!

Malcolm then introduced **Harry King,** from BBC Radio Cumbria, who was at the venue doing a live broadcast dedicated to Bing. Throughout the day, members attending the meeting were invited individually to go out and be interviewed live, by Harry. The looks on their faces reminded me of how I felt

when, as a police officer over the years, I waited for the call to go into court to give evidence, or speak on local radio as a 'police spokesman said'! Anyway, well done guys, it's a nerve racking experience, especially when it's live!

Ken Crossland does his bit with Harry King

Harry addressed the meeting, relating the story of when, years ago, Bing was staying with **Lord Lonsdale** in Cumbria, he was asked to do an interview on site. It was pouring with rain and Bing came down the stairs wearing his straw hat and insisted the interview be conducted outside in the rain. Mystified, Harry was later advised that Bing had forgotten his toupee and would not do an interview inside without it, hence the hat and the outside broadcast. What a little gem of a story! Harry seems a great guy, and went down well at the meeting. We also heard a little montage of music, put together by the programme entitled 'Bing and friends'.

There followed a recorded message from Bing to the meeting of 1975, in which he thanked his many friends in the UK for their support, saying 'I think I have more friends in England than anywhere in the world'. He also talked about his son **Harry Crosby** winning a golf tournament and referred to his recent game with **Tom Weiskopf** as his partner, before wishing members a 'festive evening and dinner party'. This of course made me feel terrible! I was 25 when that message was recorded and had I known about the club, I might have attended and heard it first hand. I might even, like some of the assembled gathering, have found the opportunity to meet Bing in person. Do I sound envious!

The next part was a sheer delight, with long lost recordings of Bing's Woodbury Shows from 1934 being heard alongside a photo presentation, after Malcolm received copies from **Michael Feinstein**. Mr. Feinstein had obtained the recordings from the widow of **Georgie Stoll**, and permission to play them at this session was given. Malcolm expressed sincere thanks to **Michael Feinstein** for this unique opportunity to hear music by Bing unheard for 70 years. Apart from the mind boggling thought of the shows promoting the 1930's sales of Woodbury Facial Soap, the recording was quite remarkable in highlighting just how rich and powerful Bing's voice was in 1934, along with its quality and range. Malcolm indicated that a CD with a small booklet may be possible for a cost in the region of £4 each for members only.

One poignant photo used in this sequence showed Bing and Dixie Lee lovingly holding a new born baby, which I think was Gary. Little did they realise the negative impact he would have on Bing's memory many years later.

Next on the agenda was a showing of British Pathe recordings from the war years, some of which tested my note taking in the extreme, but suffice it to say, Bing was just his usual great self, despite being introduced by a man looking suspiciously like **Anthony Eden**. Bing also chatted without his toupee, which I must say doesn't affect my admiration of him and neither does the fact that he lost a 1952 celebrity golf match featured, partnering **Bob Hope** against two old starstruck entertainers going by the names of **Donald Peers** and **Ted Ray**! Ok albeit I was born in the same year, yes I do actually remember them! Apparently 8 holes had to be abandoned due to the size of the crowd wanting to see Hope and Crosby and the difficulty and time taken to get through the crowd! But then they were dealing with the 'most popular man on the planet'. Whose quote was that? Good question for Arnold's quiz next year!

Malcolm continued to surprise us with a bearded Bing in extracts from *Dr Cook's Garden*, a serious one-off where Bing, in Malcolm's words, 'kills off all the locals as a doctor, the Harold Shipman of his day'! The serious side however, is that this performance showed just how good an actor Bing was!

With dinner looming and Malcolm and others popping out for their interviews with Harry, we then watched an array of goodies, including Bing's 1975 appearance on *Top of the Pops*, looking as relaxed as ever, singing 'That's what life is all about' surrounded by an audience of teenagers, and a 1976 duet with Liza Minnelli, Bing singing 'The way we were', whilst she sang the Beatles' 'Yesterday' (Not sure about the wisdom in that, I suppose they matched). I also wondered what Bing was thinking, bearing in mind the words of the song, 'The way we were' and the fact that years previously he had sung duets with her mother, Judy Garland! An extract from the 1975 **Parkinson** interview was shown, with Parky proving how out of tune he could sing, in a duet with Bing trying to keep a straight face in 'Pleasure of Your Company', plus a superb duet with Pearl Bailey, a request from Bert Bishop.

A few excerpts from Bing's TV series of the 60's were shown, with Bing in good voice with some nice little tunes, although the series was probably not the most inspired of Bing's enterprises.

Just before dinner, **Ken Crossland** gave an update on the imminent book put together by him and Malcolm **'Perry Como, a Biography and Career Chronicle'**. The book includes a 100,000 word narrative, discography, TV shows, a year by year chronicle and an intro by **Michael Feinstein** and is due for release next May/June. Interestingly Ken, after extensive research into Como's career, made the point that, in his view, of all the singers, including Bing and Sinatra, Como was technically the best, a point for discussion perhaps.

So to food! A very good meal in good company, with loads of stories told round the tables. I love this bit. This is where I interrogate members for Bing stories and try to soak up as much information as I can over my roast beef and calorie laden pudding. But more about stories next!

Directly after dinner, Malcolm played 'Granada', a track from the latest Sepia CD. He thought that many members might not have heard the song in its entirety as the version on LP and CD had been edited to take out the opening bars. He then handed over to me.

Last year I made a suggestion, that new members have not had the opportunity to hear the many Bing stories older members have to tell. We read through back copies of the magazine, see names no longer with us and each year we mourn the passing of more fine people whose memories die with them. I made a passionate plea to those present to share their memories of Bing, especially if they met him, or saw him live. Also to tell us what impact he has had on their lives, and why. And to cut a long story short, I suggested members be encouraged to write down their individual stories and I will collate them. It's only an embryo idea at present, but look out for a questionnaire whereby all those reading the magazine will have the opportunity to be part of it.

George O'Reilly told me about the time he stayed with Bing in his home as a personal friend, WOW! **Bert Bishop** related a time when, unable to attend a meeting to see Bing, he received a personal phone call from him out of the blue. Even more WOW! Watching Bing's films helped **June Coates** deal with bereavement, making the difference between surviving and going down completely. **Arnold Pope** even remembered a "Bing Sings" programme on Radio Luxembourg promoting 'Carter's Little Liver Pills', believe it or not! I'm not too sure if Bing would have wanted to be remembered for that!

Another special treat was then in store as Malcolm, with a sense of eager anticipation in his voice, and looking like the cat with the cream, proceeded to play a collection of 1960's Hollywood Palace Shows, not on general release, but obtained by Greg Van Beek, who forwarded them for our enjoyment. We watched and listened to a wonderful exchange between Bing and Johnny Mercer, with Bing looking unbelievably relaxed and at the top of his form. No wonder so many artists said Bing was the easiest person to work with in show business! There followed duets with Bing's great friend, Rosemary Clooney, Caterina Valente plus a very young looking Glen Campbell and much to my surprise, and probably Bing's, the late Tiny Tim! Bing although gracious, perhaps looked a little bemused, probably wondering what he had done to deserve this, and what on earth this strange man was doing on his show. Oh well, possibly I am being a little unkind! It didn't take much persuasion for the assembled gathering to raise the roof with a massive round of applause for **Greg Van Beek**, 'Man of Meeting' for this much sought after material.

Bing cavorts with Caterina Valente on a 1965 Hollywood Palace show.

And to Arnold's Quiz! Why the fear and trepidation on members' faces when Arnold steps up to the podium? It must be the realisation that you don't know as much as you thought and that it is now going to be horribly exposed! Well nobody scored a perfect 10, not even **Ken Crossland**! But he had obviously seen what was coming next and had made a hasty exit, sighting a long journey home as the reason. Of course we all believed him! So it was left to us mere mortals to fight it out. The English, myself included with a massive total of three, failed about as miserably as our English Eurovision Song Contest performers of late and it was left to the Danish, Irish and Welsh, with help from an Englishman now representing France, to save the day, in the shape respectively, of Ole and Gun, George O'Reilly, Norman

Jones and Jeremy Rose. I was gutted, as I so wanted the collection of CD's of Bing's Christmas shows from the USA. Thanks went to Arthur Blood, for donating a lovely framed montage of *High Society* images snapped up by **Barry Whittingham** for club funds. *(Editor: see Trading Post if you would like to purchase one of these limited editions).*

Finally the piece de résistance and Malcolm's trump card! No less than a copy of *Holiday Inn* in colour! We were treated to highlights from the film, including, of course the 'White Christmas' fireside scene. **Marjorie Reynolds** looked even more beautiful in colour and the usual lump in the throat developed within seconds of the scene taking shape. **June Coates** glanced across at me and said 'they really broke the mould when they made him didn't they?' What an end to the programme, brilliant Malcolm!

Michael led a round of applause for Malcolm and described this meeting as the best ever, which brought a huge shout of agreement. A unanimous decision was made to continue with next year's event, despite falling numbers and we agreed to do all in our power to attract more attendees for that, the 44th event. I sincerely hope this report really wets your appetite for what is undoubtedly a fantastic day, Malcolm and Michael deserving of future support for the unbelievable dedication in making such an event a reality for us.

Well I seem to have written enough to fill one magazine, so I'll finish now with this one last thought. Bing Crosby is worth remembering at a time when celebrity stardom comes with a couple of appearances on a reality show, when stars are idolised for two or three mediocre songs or films, or for kicking a ball about. Bing embarked on the long road to stardom, enduring hardship and gradually becoming recognised as 'The Voice of the Century'. He shunned personal acclaim, had a massive influence on millions of people's lives, especially during the war years and showed that normality can be retained alongside fame. For me Bing's voice brought reassurance as a small child of about twelve and took away fears in the darkness. All I had were some of my father's 78 rpm records, which included 'White Christmas' and I really didn't know who Bing was until I saw him one snowy Christmas Eve in the film *White Christmas*. I remain as transfixed now, as I did then. I mentioned some of the testimonies from others earlier in this report and I know there many other poignant and relevant stories out there. As members of the International Club Crosby let's record them and pass them, along with Bing's music, onto a new generation.

Bob Halls

Editor: Thanks, Bob, for a great report. His enthusiasm really comes through doesn't it? Bob asked me to reproduce the words used in my opening presentation which was just to remind people how important Bing was. You will recognise most of the following facts as coming from Gary Giddins' wonderful book "A Pocketful Of Dreams".

- First full-time vocalist with an orchestra
- More studio recordings than anyone (about 400 more than Frank Sinatra)
- Made the most popular record ever, "White Christmas"
- Had 396 charted records. Compared with Sinatra (209), Elvis (149), The Beatles (68).
- Had most number one hits ever, 38, The Beatles (24), Elvis (18).
- No. 1 box-office attraction 5 times (1944-48). In the top ten of box-office stars 15 times.
- Nominated for an Academy award for best actor 3 times and won for *Going My Way.*
- Major radio star longer than any other performer – 1931-1962. About 3470 radio broadcasts.
- Driving force behind the use of tape for recording radio shows
- Created first and longest-running pro-am golf championship, raising millions for charity.
- Central figure in the development of the Del Mar racetrack
- Part owner of the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball team for many years.

Another who has sent us his comments about the Leeds gathering is **Jeremy Rose.** Jeremy had travelled from France to attend the meeting and had to leave the hotel on the Monday morning at 5:30 a.m. to drive back over the Pennines to Liverpool for his plane.

More About Leeds

The Leeds meeting this year was only my second, following my "initiation" in 2007. I know that Bob Halls (another "2nd-timer") will be giving a full report on the day elsewhere in this issue, but I thought I would just like to set down what it actually means to me to have finally made it to Leeds after all these years.

I say "after all these years" because I have been a Crosby collector for more than 30 years. Up until a few years ago, I concentrated almost solely on the commercial discography – trying to amass as much as possible of that amazing body of work achieved over more than half a century. Working at first from the type-written discography I obtained from the club in the mid-seventies and later from my still-treasured copy of Bert Bishop and John Bassett's *Bing – Just for the Record*, I steadily built up what I thought was a pretty decent collection.

Some time in the very early 80s, however, I had some sort of brain-storm (I can't even call it a mid-life crisis because I was in my mid twenties!) and decided to sell my collection. I think I realised that the task of trying to collect all of Bing's commercial output was an impossible one, so I put an ad. in the club magazine – at

that time still typewritten, I seem to remember - and eventually found myself driving up to Chipping Sodbury in Gloucestershire to pass on my collection to a fellow member.

One thing about that event has a direct link for me to the Leeds meeting. As I unloaded the collection from the car, the last thing I handed over was my copy of *Bing – Just For The Record.* The chap who was buying my collection - I'm afraid I can't recall his name, but I'll always be grateful to him – said, "You never know, you might want to start collecting again one day. Why don't you hang on to that?" I did hang on to it. A couple of years later I saw the first (LP) volume of *The Chronological Bing Crosby* in a London record shop and I was off on the Crosby trail again. Twenty-five years after *that* I found myself on the first Sunday in October at the Leeds meeting in the company of Bert Bishop, co-author of *Bing – Just For The Record.*

For me, that is one of the most compelling reasons for attending. For that one day in early October each year there is an absolutely unparalleled amount of knowledge of all things Crosby – not to mention personal contact with the man himself - gathered together in a presentation room of a Leeds hotel in the person of enthusiasts who, for me at least over the years, have just been names in *BING* magazine - Bert Bishop, Ken Crossland, George O'Reilly, Michael Crampton and Malcolm Macfarlane to name but a few...

All of these – and many others, of course – spend a considerable chunk of their time keeping the Crosby flame burning. Long may they continue.

There is, of course, always something new to be discovered during the day. Apart from the wonderful DVD compilation presented by Malcolm and the mouth-watering *Hollywood Palace* clips sent across the pond by Greg Van Beek, I discovered a little gem almost as soon as I walked through the door. Malcolm was playing a disc of tracks from 1950s General Electric Radio Shows. One of these was *C.O.D.* ("Send Me C.O.D. My Broken Heart"). It was a new one on me, and is now a firm favourite. Worth the cost of the trip for that alone!

At the end of the day, of course, it is the people who make the day such a wonderful experience. We are all there for the same reason, and, as Michael says each year when he announces the meeting in *BING*, we are amongst friends. Both last year and this, Trevor Wagstaff took a couple of photographs and took the trouble to forward them to me at home in France - thanks Trevor.

When we went for dinner at the mid-session break I sat next to a chap called Cliff Simmonds who had travelled over with his daughter by train from his home in Haworth. Apart from a love of Bing, Cliff and I also shared a sense of humour and had a great time over dinner. As I said, we were amongst friends.

I regret very much that it has taken me so long to get the Leeds "habit", but for *all* of the above reasons I will be back next year and every year as long as the announcement of the forthcoming meeting appears on the inside back cover of BING.

Jeremy Rose

BING ON THE BOX

Well, the annual get-together at Leeds has come and gone but it certainly won't be forgotten by all those who were able to attend. We've had some really great meetings in past years with some lovely guests – our American friends, Bing's family and supporters, Ken Barnes and Alan Fisher to name just a few; but for Bing content this past meeting must have been unequalled. A full report has appeared elsewhere but the nature of this column relates to what has been seen or heard on the airwaves, which brings us around to the presence of BBC Radio Cumbria who did a live broadcast from the Weetwood Conference Centre. The presenter, Harry King along with his technician, Angie, set up their equipment in the foyer adjacent to our room and announced to the listeners the nature of this 'special'. It wasn't all Bing, and from time to time some of us attending were invited to speak over the air and say why we were fans and comment on Bing's association and relationship to other popular artistes contemporary with him.

It all began, though, on the 4th August when Harry did an interview with Malcolm during which he took the presenter through a broad account of the life and times of Bing interspersed with appropriate songs. In fact one part of the programme devoted some fifteen minutes to a few bars of songs made famous by Bing, almost a mini-version of Bing's Palladium medley! In a conversational 'question and answer' manner Malcolm was able to cover Bing's family life and religious upbringing, his recording, film and TV career and his love of the great outdoors and its famous sporting connections to the world of golf and horse racing. Malcolm was careful to introduce most of Bing's statistical achievements most of which place him way out front of any other performer. All in all a very competent and confident interview at which point Harry brought the programme to a close by asking Malcolm:

"What does it mean – the legend – to you?"

"He was the biggest thing in show business. The warmth of his voice and personality. One of the most loved personalities of all time."

"It can't get better than that", said Harry, "so we'll

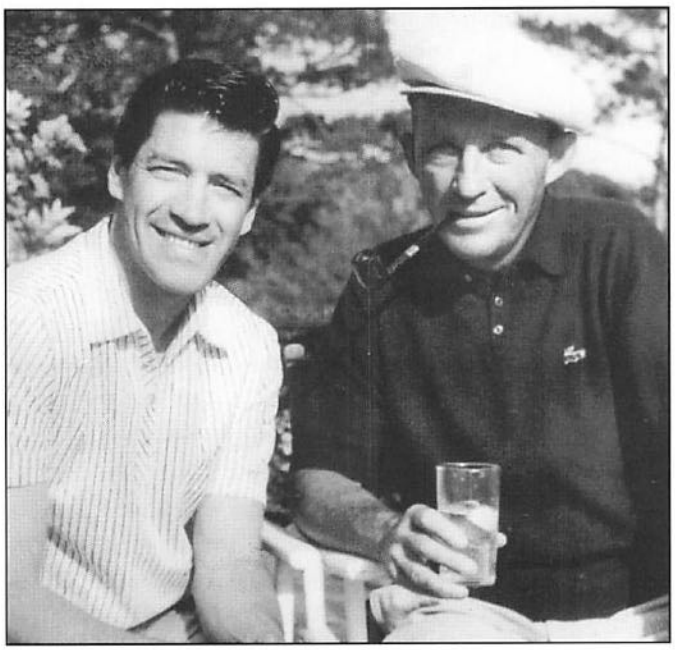
leave it there."

But just time for one more track; Bing and Satchmo laying the truth upon Harry's listeners with *Now You Has Jazz.*

THE BIG BROADCAST

The 5th October transmission began at 4 p.m. with Bing singing *May I Have The Pleasure Of Your Company?* from the recorded Palladium show. Harry King announced that he was 'gate crashing' the ICC's 43rd annual meeting at Weetwood and immediately introduced our Secretary/Treasurer **Michael Crampton** who has held that post for twenty years but has organized the event for all of the forty-three years. In learning of the team's dedication, illustrated by the various books and high quality magazine, Harry heaped praise on Michael and all those at the helm, including Malcolm for his Diary of Bing's life. Michael, who joined the ICC in 1956, paid his own tribute to previous secretaries, in particular Reg Bristo, and to the late John Joyce an esteemed member whose publishing company was responsible for the introduction of our unique magazine. No other appreciation society can come close in that respect said Michael. Music followed with Bing and Peggy Lee duetting *So In Love* from a radio broadcast followed by the Burke and Van Heusen hit song from *Road To Morocco,* "Moonlight Becomes You".

Next up was the highly experienced interviewee **Ken Crossland**. His brief on air was to talk about some Bing 'soundalikes' particularly the subject matter of his published book, *The Man Who Would Be Bing*, Michael Holliday, and similarly, Perry Como whose biography by Ken and Malcolm will become available next summer. Ken explored in some depth the relationship of Michael Holliday and Bing who Michael adored, albeit at the expense of his own worthiness and eventual inability to cope with that lack of self esteem.



Michael Holliday meets his idol for the first time.

There was a short discussion on the 'British Bing Crosby', Denny Dennis, who sang with Roy Fox, and a mention of the Canadian Crosby, Dick Todd, before turning to Perry Como the most technically perfect of all the vocalists of his time and the most genuinely relaxed, thought Ken. Asked to proffer an epitaph for Bing and the others, Ken quoted Parkinson who said "Bing.....a man who invented a style that many copied but none surpassed". A last word on Denny Dennis was that he was the archetypal dance band vocalist. Of Michael Holliday Ken said - and this is a quote from Ken's book – 'He was a tortured soul who had a gift that he could open his mouth and sing like a bird; but it was a gift given to someone who found that adulation and anonymity refused to go hand in hand.' For Perry Como Ken quoted the man himself again: "I was a barber and then I was a singer. That's it." Songs played to illustrate the dialogue were *Skylark* by Michael Holliday, *And The Angels Sing* by Denny Dennis and *Till The End Of Time* for Perry. The programme also featured the musical prologue played on Perry's television shows.

Margaret Kliskey was the first of the ladies to participate and Harry asked her "How did it all start for you?"

"My mother used to take me to the cinema a lot. I suppose *Star Maker* was one of the first films I saw. I love all his films." In a relaxed and conversational way she went on to say that *If I Had My way* is probably her favourite recording, but 'Bing could sing anything; he was unique'. Margaret also recalled meeting Bing at the Palladium stage door and how if one wrote to him there would always be a reply. She made reference to the people he sang with, especially Louis Armstrong. Cue for another song: Bing and Louis from radio with *A Kiss To Build A Dream On.*

John Walton was then called from the meeting to offer his thoughts on things Bing. Speaking very competently he said how the 1942 film *Holiday Inn* ought to have been shot in colour but a colourised version was about to be released. The purists say it should stay in black and white and John sympathized with their views especially as when shot the lighting would have been entirely different. Harry advised him that he may be in for a surprise before the meeting drew to a close! There was some discussion on *High Society* - the last great MGM movie felt Harry - and of course Bing's almost family relationship with the cast of that film: Frank Sinatra, Louis Armstrong and Celeste Holm; however, a discreet veil was drawn over any 'friendship' with Grace Kelly. To round off, musically, Bing and Frank sang *Well, Did You Evah?* and from radio the duet of *September Song* and then to a chanteuse who may well be called, vocally, the distaff Satchmo, Ella Fitzgerald. Bing was heard duetting *Dreamer's Holiday* from radio and then Ella sang what was Jean Simmons' number in *Guys & Dolls, If I Were A Bell* to conclude the first hour of the broadcast.

In the second hour of the programme, and to further the connection of Bing and other artistes of his time, 'yours truly' was invited to speak a little about knowing and greatly admiring our man and, also, about the British *answer* to Bing Crosby, Al Bowlly. This included a very potted biography of this other 'singing barber' who later became known as 'The Ambassador Of Song' and who was to die so tragically in the Blitz only two weeks after recording *When That Man Is Dead And Gone*. Al had gone to the States in 1934 with Ray Noble, who became very popular there, but Al himself did not after all appear in *The Big Broadcast Of 1936* as intended. However, while in the Paramount studio he may well have met up with Bing who sang *I Wished On The Moon* in the film. My choice of a Bowlly record was *Hang Out The Stars In Indiana* which Al recorded with Ray Noble's New Mayfair Dance Orchestra in 1931.

Bert does his stint on the Radio Cumbria broadcast.

Colin Stewart was brought to the microphone to relate how when in London on a business trip in 1977 he queued for four hours to see Bing at the Palladium. Bing came on very sprightly and sang little snatches of forgotten songs from his youth endearing himself to the audience in the process. 'Bing's voice was terrific having just made all those Ken Barnes records.' Later in the show, said Colin, Bing had that twenty-five minute medley wherein the audience sang along. It has been suggested, he said, that Bing 'deliberately' sang the wrong words here and there so that he could have some repartee with the audience: "You know, I think that you're right and I'm wrong; I'm going to take you all back to America with me. The Westminster Choir!" Harry conversed with Colin about Rosemary Clooney and that 'gorgeous red dress' she wore as she sang *Mad About The Boy* during the Noël Coward selection. From there was but a sort step to another of Bing's lady duettists, Judy Garland selected by Harry to feature the Irving Berlin counter melody song *You're Just In Love,* again from the wireless. And then time for another Bing solo, and one of his late recordings also heard at the London Palladium, *The Way We Were*. This was followed by a very enjoyable instrumental version of the Johnny Mercer song *I'm An Old Cowhand* that Bing sang in *Rhythm On The Range*. This track came from a tribute-to-Bing album by Bobby Gordon.

Two more ladies took their seats in the interviewee chair. Firstly, **Judy Crampton** who was asked "Are you a Bing fan?" "No", she replied, but denied that she is the equivalent of a golf widow. 'I have to say being married to Michael has opened up a different world for me. Pat [Macfarlane] and I have had some great trips to the U.S.A.; Washington State and shopping in New York. We've been to some lovely places and I've met some very nice people in the Crosby Circle.' One of whom, she said was Ken Crossland whom they have known since he was an eloquent sixteen year old and on through his university years.

On the other hand **Mary Winspear,** along with her husband Michael, are both Bing fans, though when she met Michael she didn't think she'd heard of Bing she said! Michael grew up with Bing in the 'Thirties and 'Forties and was a Crosby collector. By the 1980s they had joined the ICC and on a holiday down south had the opportunity to visit the late Leslie Gaylor and been given a tour of his remarkable Bing room on the Isle Of Wight.

This created a good opportunity for Harry to explore in music Bing and *his* friends with song excerpts featuring the Andrews Sisters, Dick Haymes, Al Jolson, Connee Boswell, Fred Astaire, Bob Hope, Dixie Lee Crosby, son Gary, Mary Martin and Rosemary Clooney. Of course, a complete track from Bing and Rosie was essential listening and from their Travellin' Two-Beat album Harry played *Isle Of Capri.*

Time now for an introduction to Malcolm, our editor, who had laid on a remarkable programme of film, music and accompanying stills throughout the meeting. Inevitably there was some repetition of Malcolm's previous interview by Harry but this time he was able to sum up Bing's place in the vocal hierarchy by saying that Bing started it all and set the tone for the Sinatras, the Comos and the Tony Bennetts to follow. 'Bing was so accessible and went out of his way to look after us fans', he said. Malcolm had made Harry aware of the Michael Feinstein owned tracks which had come into his possession from the estate of the late Georgie Stoll several of which were played during the meeting and one of which, *Out In The Cold Again* from a 1934 Woodbury Soap radio broadcast, was played over the BBC Radio Cumbria airwaves. A rarity for Harry's listeners as this track had never been aired in Britain before. It was then that Harry told Malcolm and his listeners that on the previous Friday he had interviewed

Mary Crosby for the programme and was about to introduce her, which he did with a few bars from her father singing *Too Marvellous For Words*:

"Mary, how important to your father are organisations like this now on its forty-third meeting?"

"Yes; and I want to say congratulations! We as a family are so grateful because dad was very much an 'under the radar' kind of guy. He was very appreciative. He kept a low profile and as a family we followed that lead. So the ones who have done all the work are the fans and they have kept his name and music alive out there and as a family we are just learning to get on board. We are just so grateful. There are so many names we could bring up." At this point Mary reeled off about a dozen names and among those not already mentioned in this column were Trevor Wagstaff, Ron Bosley, George O'Reilly, Stan White, Arthur Blood and Wig Wiggins.

"The music, photos and clips on our website are all from the fans. The memory of my Dad will never die thanks to them. They are the heroes."

Then it was back to Malcolm who opined 'Mary really is her father's daughter; to us he is a family friend', and when asked by Harry what he suggests as Bing's epitaph Malcolm could do no better than quote Bing himself:

'He was an average guy who could carry a tune.'

Before this interesting live broadcast came to an end there was just time to play *South Rampart Street Parade* from the Bob Crosby Orchestra; a "Goodnight" from Harry along with his thanks to the helpful Weetwood staff and his programme technicians, and a grand finale of Bing from the London Palladium singing *That's What Life Is All About.*

ANNE HOPPER was disappointed that it wasn't her presenting the live broadcast; in fact she had to stand in for Harry for his usual show on 1st September so missed the opportunity to be with her listener friends at the ICC. But she has been faithful to the cause throughout the summer and had you been tuned in to her likeable show at BBC Radio Cumbria you would have heard Bing and friends with:

A Couple Of Song And Dance Men, Sierra Sue, How Are Things In Glocca Morra, Sunshine Cake, It's The Natural Thing To Do, You Don't Have to Know the Language, Apalachicola FLA, Play A Simple Melody, Sunday, Monday Or Always, Chattanoogie Shoe Shine Boy, Gotta Get Me Somebody To Love, South America, Take It Away, Fancy Meeting You Here, Just The Way You Are [radio], *Now You Has Jazz, How Lucky Can You Get?, I Love You Samantha, The Big Movie Show In The Sky, Where The Blue Of The Night* [1945], *Everybody Step, In The Cool, Cool, Cool Of The Evening.* An eclectic mix with some of Bing's best microphone mates sharing the honours. Anne loves to hear from you, feedback or requests. All you need is a little effort to get in touch:-

Anne Hopper at BBC Radio Cumbria's Barrow Studios:

Broadcasting House
Hartington Street
BARROW-IN-FURNESS
Cumbria - LA14 5SL
Telephone: 01229 83525
e-mail: anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk

DAVID LOWE keeps up the pace with a great variety of Crosby recordings some from way back when. There is a cut off point though; so a request for *That's What Life Is All About* fell the wrong side of it. However, the Beach-Trenet song *I Wish You Love* was offered as an appropriate substitute. However, this Buddy Cole / Pete Moore accompanied track from Bing comes across as more of an 'end of relationship' song than a reflection of his life. Two very long lives that *were* celebrated in song related to a couple celebrating seventy-four years of married life. Shortly after Bing recorded *May I?* in February 1934 the happy couple tied the knot and now, aged ninety-four, they relived their day through the lovely words and music of Mack Gordon and Harry Revel, the music of Nat Finston and the voice of Bing - and as take-B of the song fades on the final bars one wonders is Bing *ever* going to sing those final, all-important words - "I do"?

One also may wonder how it was that Bing was so badly recorded on the 1965 tracks with the Mishel Piastro [Geoff Love] orchestra. Nice songs on that collection but disappointing to hear when one considers the potential. David played a few which probably went down quite well with his listeners anyway; but a missed opportunity in the recording studio. We saw a clip of Bing singing *Amor* at the All-Services Club in London at the Leeds meeting. Composed by Gabriel Ruiz and Sunny Skylar for the 1944 film *Broadway Rhythm* this track was one of several from the same period when Bing was at the height of his popularity that featured on David's programme which can be heard regularly each weekend on BBC Radio Bristol. Unmissable for ICC members living within transmitter range!

SMOKESCREEN

Mike Carey always comes up with something unusual and on this occasion more or less the complete Chesterfield broadcast of the 25th January 1950. This was led into by exploring the now defunct practice of advertising tobacco products. Not by way of judgment, merely examining the historical significance. Of course, our interests lie in the entertainment and for this show Bing's guests were Peggy Lee, Louis Armstrong, Joe Venuti and Jack Teagarden, as well as the usual support from John Scott Trotter, Jud Conlon's Rhythmaires and the ever present Ken Carpenter. In fact Bing and Ken did a singing commercial for Chesterfield cigarettes!

With such a cast it was always going to be an up-tempo show with the nearest thing to a ballad being Peggy's rendition of *I'm Coming Virginia*. Most readers will be aware of the *Blueberry Hill* and *Lazybones* duets Bing performs with Satchmo but it's nice to know that Joe Public up there in the Peak District is being exposed to these joyous renditions. If that's not enough, Mike also played s/t songs from both film versions of *Anything Goes* and there can be little better than hearing Bing and Ethel Merman duetting that wonderful Cole Porter song *You're The Top*. BBC Radio Derby is what you need to tune into for this welcome diversion from 'the best of Bing'.

Bing and Ethel tell each other "You're The Top".

Angela Rennells went to Australia for a while leaving husband Bill to handle their popular programme. Unfortunately, Angela had a nasty fall out there and good wishes are sent for her recovery and were also sent from listeners to their programme including Bing singing *How Can You Buy Killarney?* Angela is a huge Bing fan! Other recipients of good wishes were Michael Crampton, on his retirement, from Trevor Wagstaff, and again from Trevor, to Stan White with a later reversal of happy listening via *The Big Movie Show In The Sky, On The Way To Waikiki* and *East Side Of Heaven*. Which goes to show that it is always worth contacting local presenters, Bill and Angel Rennells especially as they always come up with the goods. Their address being Harmony Night, BBC Oxford, P.O. Box 95.2, Oxford OH2 7YL or email bill.rennells@bbc.co.uk

RYDER CUP

Bing's two famous golfing songs are just right to musically enhance this major golfing tournament and BBC coverage featured *Straight Down The Middle*. But local radio didn't overlook the opportunity either and **Paul Barnes** played both in succession with *Tomorrow's My Lucky Day* being his favourite of the two. Both had music by Jimmy Van Heusen but while it was Sammy Cahn who wrote the most famous one, it was Johnny Burke who penned the lyric for the latter. The original recordings had the Buddy Cole Orchestra as accompaniment but Barnsey picked up on the overdubbed Pete Moore version whereon the stereophonics whizz the golf ball from speaker across to speaker! Fore! Both songs sung 'with all the conviction of a dedicated golfer!' opined Paul. The BING calendar is always celebrated by him and the August page called for *I Love Paris*. As this recording is not in the Gold For Grown Ups collection a suitable substitute proved to be *Paris Holiday* duetted with Bob Hope and backed by the Joseph Lilley Orchestra and Chorus. More Gallic connections were to be featured with *La Mer* sung in French from Crosby's album *Le Bing*. 'Bing makes a good fist of it', thought Barnsey, and it has a nice arrangement from Paul Durand. In celebrating 'Trummie' Young's birthday what better track than *Now You Has Jazz* on which Bing actually introduces this talented musician, along with the rest of the Armstrong All Stars. Another Satchmo duet was *A Kiss To Build A Dream On;* and with such jazz orientated tracks as *Shoo-Fly Pie And Apple Pan Dowdy,* a test version of *Don't Be That Way* and *Whispering*, from the Bob Scobey album, to say nothing of the Take –B cut of *Where The Blue Of The* Night from the 1931 session with great accompaniment from Eddie Lang, there's been much to enjoy of the Norwich based programme which may be contacted as follows:

Paul Barnes, BBC The Forum, Millennium Plains, Norwich NR2 1BH

Saturdays, 18.00 [Essex 19.00] until 21.00 (BST) on world wide web: www.bbc.co.uk/norfolk or tune in to

BBC Radio Cambs - 95.7 and 96.0 FM
BBC Essex - 95.3 and 103.5 FM
BBC Radio Norfolk - 95.1 and 104.4 FM
BBC Radio Northampton - 103.6 and 104.2 FM
BBC Radio Suffolk - 95.5 and 103.9 and 104.6 FM

SAIL BOATS

Now there's a good old fashioned term for a craft that might be considered less pretentious than a yacht. **Russell Davies** constructed a part of one his programmes around that theme during which he featured Dick Todd's recording of *I'm Building A Sail Boat Of Dreams*; 'A nice version more committed than Bing Crosby's', and he makes a good point. But to balance up the account few come close to Bing's *True Love* which followed. Apparently Bing and Tommy Dorsey used to do a routine called 'I wonder where Dick Todd is tonight?' Never heard of it myself, though. Of a new Retrieval release entitled Bing Crosby - Jazz Singer 1931-1941, Russell was to say that 'Bing had a way with

a beat better than any white performer and most black Americans.' To prove the point he featured *Some Of These Days* and the –B Take of *Moonburn* on which we hear Bing's encouragement to Joe Sullivan, *'mellow, mellow'*. Sounds a CD worth acquiring. (SEE BING #148, page 55 for the full track listing). Catch Russell's very interesting programme on BBC Radio 2, 88-90.2 FM at 9 p.m. on Sundays.

Howard Leader of BBC Radio Lincolnshire that goes out on three frequencies, 102.2 - 96.7 - 97.6, also has a Sunday programme of up-tempo music, but afternoons at 3 p.m. Bing often features and recently heard have been the 1929 recording of *After You've Gone*, with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, and the Jack Scholl–M.K. Jerome number from 1939 *My Little Buckaroo* that has no *raison d'etre* other than being just a charming cowboy song.

One early week day morning on BBC R2, normally just chat with a few 'pop' tunes intervening to give his Irish brogue a rest, Terry Wogan actually played a Bing track – *True Love* - and rather unusually, as he rarely comments afterwards, concluded with a generous reflection on Bing's 'flawless performance as always'. But of course Wogan's Eurovision days do stretch back to when ballads were the real thing and not just a visual showcase for hyped up, guitar twanging pop groups with a lead 'singer' masticating a microphone.

FROM THE USA

Chuck Schaden's *Those Were The Days* program on Chicago's WDCB 90.9FM, (which airs each Saturday afternoon from 1-5pm) featured the Lady Esther Screen Guild Players adaptations of two of Bing's classic films. *Going My Way*, originally broadcast on CBS January 8, 1945, followed by *The Bells of St. Mary's* from August 26, 1946, were the first two programs on Chuck's Saturday show. Barry Fitzgerald and Ingrid Bergman each reprise their respective roles with Bing in these half-hour adaptations. WDCB can be heard on the internet via Real Audio or Windows Media at www.wdcb.org

BING ON THE TELLY IN THE USA

Alias Jesse James, Aug. 8, TCM
My Favorite Brunette, Aug. 13, TCM
That's Entertainment, Aug. 18, TCM
My Favorite Brunette, Sept. 21, TCM
The Greatest Show on Earth, Sept. 23, Cinemax
High Time, Sept. 29, Cinemax
The Country Girl, Oct. 2, TCM
The Bells of St. Mary's, Oct. 3, TCM

Only occasional Bing films have been seen in the UK on Sky TV with the black and white version of *Holiday Inn* being the latest seen in October.

GOOD PUBLICITY?

A new, three-part domestic drama called *Sunshine* started on BBC1 television on the 7th October. The principal character was introduced by his young son, who said:

"I'd like you to meet my Dad. I think you're going to like him. His real name's Bob Crosby but everybody calls him Bing after that *White Christmas* man from the olden days."

Well, at least there's one eight year old who will actually have heard of him now!

Bert Bishop, 19th October 2008

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Jo Stafford died on July 16 of congestive heart failure. She was 90. Jo Elizabeth Stafford was born Nov. 12, 1917, in Coalinga, Calif., where her Tennessee father had come to work in the oil fields. When a new field was discovered in Long Beach, he moved his wife and four daughters south. Young Jo studied classical music for more than three years and was cast in high school productions. The 1933 Long Beach earthquake destroyed the school, and she joined her two older sisters singing pop songs on radio as the Stafford Sisters. The Staffords sang background music at film studios where, in 1939, Jo met and joined a group of male singers called the Pied Pipers. The group was invited to join the Tommy Dorsey band, a big attraction in the swing era. Soon the Pied Pipers were singing in major hotels and ballrooms and on radio. A year later, 24-year-old Frank Sinatra joined Dorsey after a brief stint with Harry James, and he and the Pied Pipers melded ideally. Their languorous "I'll Never Smile Again" became the No. 1 hit for 12 weeks and sold two million copies. A half-century later, Sinatra remarked about Stafford, "It was a joy to sit on the bandstand and listen to her."

Dorsey also used Stafford as a singer and she enjoyed chart success on a number of records with him. After leaving Dorsey, the Pied Pipers signed with the fledgling Capitol Records and at this point Stafford left the group to go solo. Johnny Mercer, one of the Capitol founders, guided her new career with hits such as "Candy" (with Mercer), "Serenade of the Bells" and "That's for Me." In demand for personal appearances, she accepted a date at New York's Club Martinique. A shy person, she never played a nightclub again.

"I'm basically a singer, period," she said in a 1996 interview, "and I think I'm really lousy up in front of an audience - it's just not me."

She was a "reluctant star," her son Tim said. "She loved making records and really didn't crave the attention of personal appearances."

At Capitol, Stafford, who had been married to Pied

Piper John Huddleston from 1941 to 1943, became reacquainted with Paul Weston, who had been an arranger for Dorsey, and he acted as her arranger and conductor for the rest of her career. They eventually married in 1952.

Despite her shyness, Stafford appeared before studio audiences in radio and television during the 1940s and 1950s. She alternated with Perry Como on the nightly 15-minute Chesterfield Supper Club radio show, guest starred on many TV variety shows and had her own TV series, "The Jo Stafford Show," in 1955-56.

She first worked with Bing on a *GI Journal* show in July 1944 when she sang "Love Is Just Around The Corner". During the 1950s, Paul Weston worked with Bing on the *Christmas Sing* radio shows and Bing would undoubtedly have met Jo frequently during this time. It was no surprise therefore that he asked her to guest on his TV special of March 2, 1959. It had been intended that Rosemary Clooney would guest with Bing and they would plug their "Fancy Meeting You Here" album but when Rosie had to withdraw, Bing grabbed Jo. At short notice, she very effectively sang Rosie's parts in eight songs from the album and delivered a lovely solo of "I'll Be Seeing You".

In 1961 when Ms Clooney was again sidelined, Jo stepped in to deputise for her on the *Christmas Sing with Bing* show.

During her career, she recorded around 600 songs and sold more than 25 million records with her ballads and folks songs. Jo's biggest hits came in the 1950s with "Shrimp Boats", "You Belong To Me" and "Make Love To Me." She dueted with Gordon MacRae and with Frankie Laine on a number of records and enjoyed a No. 1 hit with MacRae with "My Darling, My Darling" in 1948. Her versatile output included ballads, folk, Scottish, country and novelty. In 1947, Stafford briefly experimented with comedy under the name "Cinderella G. Stump" with Red Ingle and the Natural Seven. She recorded a mock hillbilly version of *Temptation,* which she pronounced "Tim-tayshun" and this was a No. 1 hit. Later, she and Paul Weston recorded an album of numbers on which she sang painfully off-key and he played miserable piano. They were billed as Jonathan and Darlene Edwards, but their identity was soon discovered. A second album won them a Grammy in 1960 for best comedy album.

Stafford made her last recording in 1970. She retired voluntarily, her son said.

"It really was to raise my sister and I. She walked away from it," he said. "People would sort of ask her, 'How come you stopped singing?' She said: 'For the same reason that Lana Turner doesn't pose in bathing suits anymore.'"

In addition to her son, Stafford is survived by a daughter, Amy Wells of Calabasas, and four grandchildren. Paul Weston died in 1996.

Edie Adams died on October 15 at the age of 81 from pneumonia and cancer. She was born Elizabeth Edith Enke in 1927 in Kingston, Pa., and grew up in Tenafly, N.J. A graduate of Juilliard School of Music, Adams hoped to become an opera singer but she first attracted notice on the TV show "Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts." Ernie Kovacs was then performing his innovative comedy show on a Philadelphia TV station, and his director saw her and invited her to audition. When she auditioned for the Kovacs show, she knew a lot about opera but only three pop songs, she recalled.

"I sang them all during the audition, and if they had asked to hear another, I never would have made it," she said.

With her innocent face and refreshing manner, Adams became the ideal partner for Kovacs' far-out humor. They eloped to Mexico City in 1954.

Kovacs moved his show — which appeared in various guises in the 1950s and early 1960s — to New York, where he became the darling of critics and discriminating viewers and hugely influential on other comedians. Both Kovacs and Adams garnered Emmy nominations in 1957 for best performances in a comedy series.

Adams found success on Broadway as well. She was acclaimed for her role as the sister to Rosalind Russell's character in the 1953 *Wonderful Town*, the Comden-Green-Bernstein musical based on "My Sister Eileen."

In 1957, Adams won a Tony for best featured (supporting) actress in a musical for her role as Daisy Mae in *Li'l Abner* based on Al Capp's satirical comic strip. She and Kovacs moved to Hollywood in the late 1950s, and both became active in films.

In Billy Wilder's classic *The Apartment*, the 1960 Oscar winner for best picture, Adams played the spurned secretary to philandering businessman Fred MacMurray.

Among her other movies were *Lover Come Back*, *Call Me Bwana* (with Bob Hope), the all-star comedy *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (as Sid Caesar's wife), *Under the Yum Yum Tree, The Best Man* and *The Honey Pot.*

In early 1962, Kovacs left a star-filled baby shower for Mrs. Milton Berle and crashed his car into a light pole, dying instantly. He had been a carefree gambler and profligate buyer of unneeded things. He once telephoned his wife and said he had bought the California Racquet Club, with its nightclub, shops and mortgages.

His widow was faced with debts of $520,000, trouble with the Internal Revenue Service and a nasty custody battle over Kovacs' daughters, Betty and Kippie, from his first marriage. She and Kovacs also had a daughter Mia, born in 1959.

For a solid year, she worked continuously. She did movies, TV musical revues and a Las Vegas act where Groucho Marx introduced her with the comment: "There are some things Edie won't do, but nothing she can't do." She appeared on Bing's TV show of May 14, 1962

and again with him on the *Hollywood Palace* show of January 14, 1967.

Edie and Bing at work on the 1962 show.

She won custody of her stepdaughters, tearfully telling reporters after the verdict: "This is the way Ernie would have wanted it."

Over a career that spanned some six decades, Adams also appeared in various stage productions; had a short-lived TV show in 1963 that earned her two Emmy nominations; performed in nightclubs and released several albums.

In the 1980s and 1990s, she made appearances on such TV shows as "Murder, She Wrote" and "Designing Women."

For nearly two decades, she also was the sexy spokeswoman for Muriel cigars, singing and breathily cooing in TV commercials: "Why don't you pick one up and smoke it sometime?"

After her widowhood, she had two brief marriages to photographer Martin Mills and trumpeter Pete Candoli.

She is survived by her son, Joshua Mills. Daughter Mia Kovacs was killed at 22 in a 1982 car accident.

Connie Haines died on September 22 in Clearwater Beach, Florida. She was 87. Yvonne Marie Antoinette JaMais was born on January. 20, 1921, in Savannah, Ga., but grew up in Florida. Her mother, who taught voice and dance, pushed her talented daughter to excel. At 9 she won a talent contest sponsored by Uncle Ralph Feathers, who in the South ran the sort of amateur contests for which Major Bowes was famous. Before she turned 10, she parlayed that into a regular radio show on the NBC affiliate in Jacksonville, Fla., billed as Baby Yvonne Marie, the Little Princess of the Air. At 10 she appeared with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, and things accelerated even faster.

She won the actual Major Bowes contest in New York, and appeared on Fred Allen's radio show. At 16 she was auditioning for a job in the Brill Building, headquarters of Tin Pan Alley. Harry James, the orchestra leader, happened to hear her and immediately hired her. But he asked her to change her name, saying she looked like a Connie. More pointedly, he said that if she used her full name, there would be no room for him on the marquee. At first she thought he had named her Ames, not Haines, and for a few days signed autographs that way.

After James ran into financial trouble, Connie and Frank Sinatra ended up with Dorsey when he was adding a robustness and kick to his style, taking on an innovative new arranger, Sy Oliver, and six new vocalists. The others were Jo Stafford and the three-man vocal group the Pied Pipers. Miss Haines said that Dorsey taught her phrasing, how to take one big breath and let the words flow. He told her to always think of telling a story, of "acting to music."

Miss Haines made 200 recordings, including 24 records that sold more than 50,000 copies; regularly filled up prestigious nightclubs like the Latin Quarter in New York; and performed five times at the White House. Polls in music magazines in the 1940s rated her as one of the top female band singers. She worked with Bing during WW2 on Command Performance and Mail Call shows as well as appearing at benefits with him. She also guested on Bing's *Philco Radio Time* programme on February 9, 1949

Connie (on right, seated) with Betty Grable and Bill Morrow on a Mail Call show.

Miss Haines also appeared on the radio with Abbott & Costello, Bob Hope and Jack Benny, among others. On television she appeared with Milton Berle, Ed Sullivan, Eddie Cantor and Perry Como. Her work on Frankie Laine's variety show drew particular note.

Her handful of movies included her favorite, *Duchess of Idaho* (1950), with Esther Williams and Van Johnson.

Connie continued performing for decades in nightclubs, cabarets and "big band" revivals despite a number of life-threatening illnesses which included a bout with cancer (for which she had a double mastectomy in 1984) and a 2002 car accident that left her with two broken vertebrae in her neck.

The "Nightingale from Savannah" was married and divorced twice. Her first was to WWII flying ace Robert DeHaven in 1945. The marriage produced one son, Robert Jr., and one daughter, Kimberly. Her marriage to popular bandleader Del Courtney (1910-2006) lasted from 1966 to 1972. She was survived by her children and the woman who influenced Connie the most—her mother and manager, Mildred, who was 109 at the time of Connie's death.

Robert Arthur, a youthful-looking actor who had supporting roles in many 1940s and '50s films died of congestive heart failure on October 1st at his home in Aberdeen, Wash. He was 83. Also known as Bob, he was born Robert Paul Arthaud on June 18, 1925, in Aberdeen. After high school, he served in the Navy, then went to Hollywood looking for work as an actor.

Bob Arthur with Bing and Jane Wyman in Just For You

He was cast in bit parts in Warner Bros. and 20th Century Fox films, and then got what he considered his big break in the 1948 western *Green Grass of Wyoming*, part of the *My Friend Flicka* series. Soon after came a series of supporting roles in military dramas, including *Twelve O'Clock High* with Gregory Peck (1949), *Air Cadet* (1951), *Take the High Ground!* (1953) and *Hellcats of the Navy* with Ronald Reagan (1957). Arthur also appeared in *September Affair*, a drama starring Joseph Cotten and Joan Fontaine (1950); *Ace in the Hole*, the 1951 film noir starring Kirk Douglas; and of course *Just for You* with Bing. He was quoted as saying:

> *"What was really surprising about Bing Crosby to me was that he really was a very, very, bright man. He knew everybody's lines and knew everything about the camera. He always came across as this relaxed performer but he was far from relaxed."*

Arthur had some parts in TV productions, including *The Lone Ranger*, but left acting in the 1960s. In 1991, he returned to guest star as the minister who marries Jesse and Becky on the TV sit-com *Full House*. While his acting career was on the shelf, Arthur bounced around to several jobs before becoming an insurance salesman.

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

Gord's regular look at some of the many celebrities he has interviewed over the years who had a connection with Bing. This time he remembers Paul Whiteman.

Reminiscing back to the beginning of my career in broadcasting I am amazed at the passage of time. It was way back in the autumn of 1948 that I began my radio career in my home town Toronto. As the Canadian representative of *The Club Crosby* I hosted my first weekly program featuring Bing's recordings along with interviews, news and views and all things of interest to Crosby fans.

As a neophyte broadcaster I also conducted my first celebrity interview. To say that I was a nervous beginner is an obvious understatement. My debut as an interviewer was with no less a musical figure than the legendary maestro of the 1920's and 1930's, Paul Whiteman. So dominant was his stature in both girth and popularity that Bing dubbed him, "the mighty mahatma of popular music." It was his insight and influence that played a major role in launching Bing's career.

The Whiteman musical brand straddled both the pop and classical fields. His recording of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* was world famous. He was in Toronto that year to conduct a Gershwin concert at Canada's historic Massey Hall.

At that time he was also touring to promote the first of his biographical books, *Records for the Millions*. One chapter was entitled, *Der Bingle and Others*. We discussed his early days with Bing and their enduring friendship. In a wonderful insight into their early association he remembered meeting Bing for the first time: "When I first heard of Bing, out on the coast, my

band was top-heavy with singers. We had gone overboard for a sweet trio, a rhythm trio, and assorted soloists. Someone told me about a couple of kids who were singing in something called the *Sunkist Revue*.

"I was always searching for new talent, and even though I didn't know what we could do with more singers, I invited them over. I'll never forget the way Bing looked the first time I saw him—a funny-looking kid with a big cap pulled down over one eye. 'What can you do?' I asked him and his partner, Al Rinker. 'We've got something different,' they chorused. 'Instead of 'vo-do-de-o-do' we sing 'da-da-de-ump-bump.' They went into their act, Rinker playing the piano and Bing socking a little cymbal as he sang. The kids were fresh and they were different, so I signed them.

"When we started East on a tour of personal appearances, Al and Bing scored a hit—as far as Chicago. After that, for some unexplained reason, audiences sat on their hands. The same act that had stopped the show out West died in the East."

On my 14-part CD series, *The Crosby Years*, Bing remembered the ups and downs of those early years with the Whiteman band, and how disappointed he and Al Rinker were when they finally made it to New York's Paramount Theatre. "Nothing happened", Bing remembered. "Maybe it was the size of the place, I don't know. Whiteman took us off centre stage. We sat in the band and hummed in the background for some of the other singers in the orchestra, Skin Young, Johnnie Fulton and Charles Gaylord. We hummed do-do-deeios and held an instrument. The audience acceptance was less than enthusiastic."

A short time later the irrepressible Harry Barris joined Bing and Al and they became Whiteman's acclaimed *Rhythm Boys*. The mighty man known as *The King of Jazz* remembered fondly how the famous trio was formed.

"One day in New York a youngster who had taken music lessons from my father out in Denver dropped by to see me backstage. He was the talented composer and pianist, Harry Barris.

"Harry had caught Bing and Al's act, and he had an idea. 'They're good,' he said, 'but nothing happens. They need new material. You've got to move them.' Well, Harry sold me and the boys on his idea, and the duo became a trio. The three kids disappeared for a few days while they experimented with new stunts. When they joined us again, Harry and Al were at twin pianos and Bing was still singing and banging his little cymbal. But what a difference! The songs Harry had written stopped our show cold. After that the new *Rhythm Boys* trio became a fixture of the band. Harry also provided Bing with his best springboard to success when he wrote *I Surrender Dear*.

"Bing made his first records, which are now collector's items, with my band. He recorded jazz and popular songs on Victor, Columbia, Brunswick, Melotone and other labels before he signed with Decca. He also made his first film with my band in 1930, when we went to Hollywood to star in *King of Jazz* for Universal."

Paul Whiteman's popularity in the 1920's was unprecedented. His debut disk in 1920 of *Whispering* was one of the first gold records with sales of over one million copies. His celebrated orchestra released over 200 dance band recordings, including his runaway hit versions of *My Blue Heaven*, *All of Me*, *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes* and his all time most popular recording of *Three O'clock in the Morning* which had an international sale of four million copies.

Throughout his career he was successful in both the pop and classical worlds of music, and was given credit for the public's acceptance of jazz-oriented orchestral arrangements. Purists, however, were critical of his "symphonic jazz sound", which they considered artificial. His bands, however, featured top jazz musicians of the era, including Bix Beiderbecke, Jack Teagarden, Bunny Berigan, Eddie Lang (Bing's frequent accompanist) and Red Norvo. He introduced solo vocalists besides Bing, notably Mildred Bailey, Morton Downey and Dinah Shore.

My 1948 conversation with the great man was broadcast live from our studio. Remembering my inadequacies at that time, I am relieved that the interview was not recorded. It was customary that anyone who appeared on the *Club Crosby* program received a fan club pin and I have a treasured photo of my pinning one on the lapel of "Pops" Whiteman's sports jacket.

Following the interview, our cameraman was poised to take the commemorative photo of our meeting. Just before the picture was taken my famous guest was concerned that his familiar pencil-thin moustache

needed to be emphasized. He borrowed an eyebrow pencil and mirror from our telephone receptionist and quickly darkened his trademark moustache. Then, as now, image in the entertainment business was almost as important as ability and talent.

Born in Denver, Colorado, Paul Whiteman was 77 when he suffered a fatal heart attack in 1967. He was one of the most influential musicians of the 20th century and Bing's musical mentor.

Gord Atkinson

Hey Jude / Hey Bing!

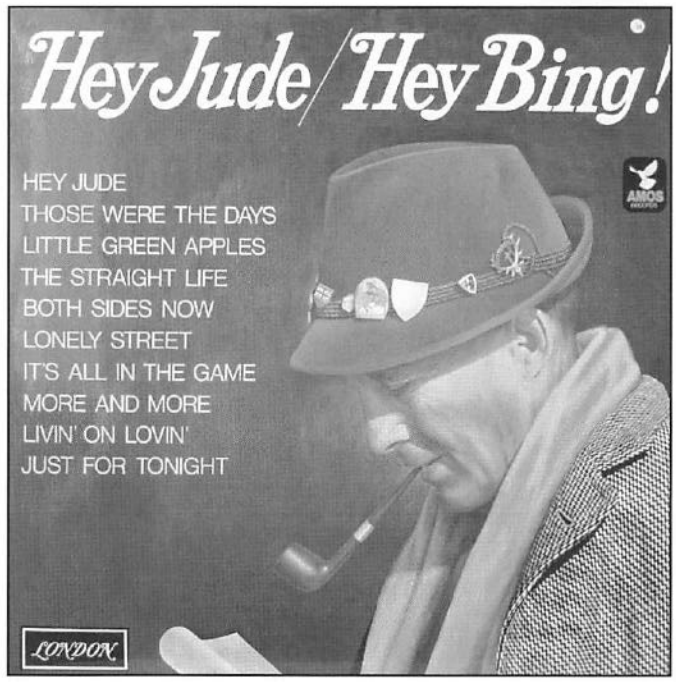
Bing made one or two albums during his career which created some controversy. For many years the virtues of *Bing sings While Bregman Swings* were hotly debated but this now appears to be accepted as a classic. In recent times, it is *Hey Jude / Hey Bing!* which has come in for criticism and in September the prolific **Steve Fay** raised a 'thread' about it on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum. Several people joined in and some were suggesting that it would be great if Ken Barnes could get hold of the master tape and remaster it.

Then **Arne Fogel** came on the scene and posted an excellent follow-up which we reproduce here:

I remember buying the *Hey Jude* album in March of '69. It was an exciting purchase. I was 19 years old, a confirmed Crosby fan and collector, and also a working musician. I was a big fan of Sinatra and Dean, but vaguely annoyed about the fact that their success on Reprise records wasn't duplicated by Bing on that same label. The advent of the "Amos Records" outlet for Jimmy Bowen allowed him to record Bing in exactly the same circumstances as he'd been recording Dean, with the same musicians, arrangers, etc., or in some cases other arrangers, but all top Hollywood session guys like the Wrecking Crew (Knetchell, Blaine, Osborn, etc.) Mike Post, & so on. The resulting sound on "Hey Jude" was exactly like Dean's contemporary albums on Reprise. If it sounds "fuzzy" to you, find yourself an original vinyl version of Dean's late-60s LPs and compare. They are so remarkably similar.

Jimmy Bowen was a "wunderkind" producer whose conception of what to do with guys like Dean and Frank totally revitalized their recording careers as "hit-makers" - especially Dean's. It always bothered me that Bing's tenure at Reprise didn't involve work with Bowen, but he had his chance with him at Amos, producing his biggest-selling non-Christmas LP of the 1960s.

The song selection was comparable to what most other artists of Bing's type - Peggy Lee, Dean Martin, Mel Torme, etc. - were doing in those days, as they scrambled to maintain their relevancy in a post-Dylan-Beatles-Stones world. This type of arrangement, with its mildly countryesque tinge and vocal chorus, was the way in which Bowen "streamlined" his middle-aged crooners into a sound that had attraction for a young-adult market of the time.



The mixing, arrangements, chorus, song selection, etc. all are exactly identical to Bowen's other productions and I would maintain that our 40-year hindsight is very interesting but the reason behind it all is obvious: Bowen was a hit-maker. He was simply doing what had worked previously for his other clients. To an extent, it also worked for Bing. It was a very transitional time in pop music, and the attempt to make a Bing or a Dean "palatable" to younger audiences produced results at the time. That this effort was needed is hard to fathom for some today, in the present day atmosphere where the world is, once again, "safe" for the music of the "Great American Songbook" era (which certainly wasn't the case in the late 60s!!).

Personal notes: - I have never figured out what the big problem is that everyone has with "Hey Jude", save for the pom-poms which are regrettable. But Bing does a good job with it otherwise. What does it mean? - The song can mean whatever you want it to mean, and if that's what troubles you, take it up with Paul McCartney, who composed this glorious classic. But your argument isn't with Crosby's record.

"Just For Tonight" is one of Bing's best recordings of the 1960s, and his line "Give me something to remember when" is pure Crosby melodic genius.

"More 'N More" is fun. A frantic arrangement in 6/8 time, (very Bowen, very 60s, with a taste of the "Bert Kaempfert" sound so popular at the time) with a totally unflappable Bing, gliding over the arrangement on shock-absorbers. A beautiful demonstration of Crosby adapting to a modern sound, yet being true to himself.

I could've done without the over-lush "Apples", but the tune was so popular at the time, I'm sure its inclusion

increased sales and radio play.

It's been said that Bing expressed a dislike for this LP many years later; I've often put forth the notion (and I'll do it once again) that Bing, in his unassuming way, was confusing the LP with another recorded that same year, "Thoroughly Modern Bing". Back in 1969, I distinctly remember Bing being interviewed by Mike Douglas, who asked him about "Hey Jude Hey Bing", and Bing's enthusiasm for the album and delight in its success was undeniable. Douglas then asked him about "Thoroughly", and Bing turned dour. Douglas sensed this and said "well, er... it has an awfully nice big picture of you on the cover," to which Bing replied, sourly, "Yeah, that was the only good thing about that album..." I believe that, several years hence, Bing confused the two LPs (both recorded the same year and promoted overtly as efforts to "modernize" Bing) and bad-mouthed 'Hey Jude' instead of the "Thoroughly Modern" release, which was certainly the most poorly produced, engineered, and recorded album in the Crosby discography.

"Hey Jude Hey Bing" is a period-piece and a document of its time, but certainly on the quality level of contemporary works by Bing's buddies at Reprise. If it sounds dated in some ways today, that shouldn't obscure its real success during Bing's late-"Hollywood Palace" period, when every "Tin-Pan-Alley" vocalist was scrambling to pull off a similar success.

Arne Fogel

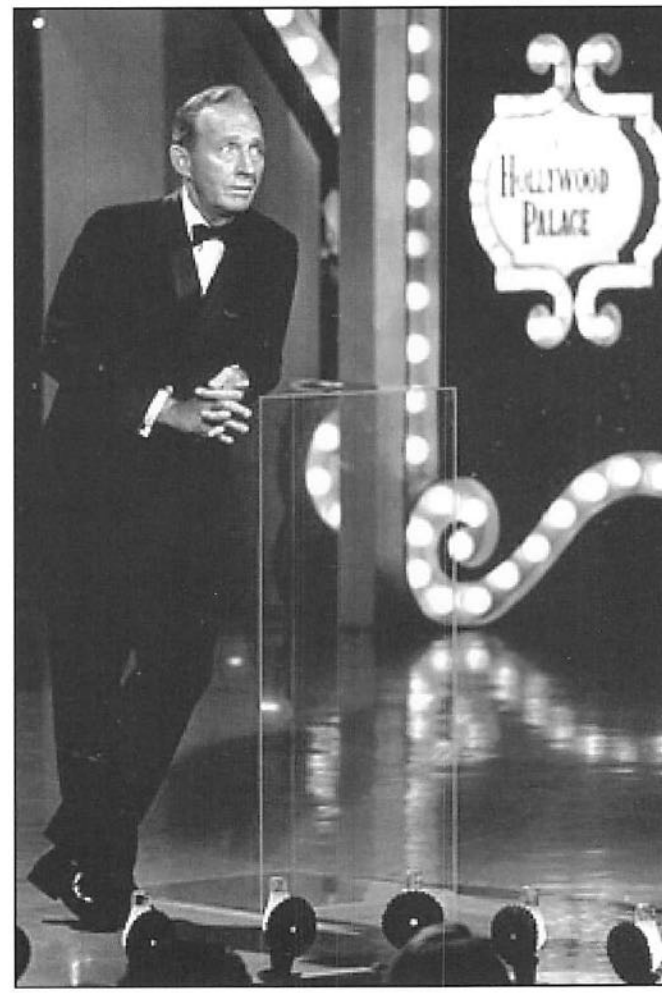
Greg Van Beek responded with:

I'm glad that Arne took the time to set the record straight, so to speak, regarding Bing's 'Hey Jude' album. It's an album that gets an undeserved bad rap. It should be pointed out that on the very day Bing cut the title tune, The Beatles' recording of it sat comfortably on top of the record charts. Perhaps that may have been among the factors in Bowen's mind to make it the lead song on the album. You couldn't make Bing more current and contemporary than by having him record the number one song in the country!

One has to look at Bing's hosting stints on the Hollywood Palace in 1969 to get a clue as to his fondness for and belief in this project. He sang ('plugged', if you will) no less than four of the album's ten tracks on Palace broadcasts; 'Both Sides Now', 'The Straight Life', 'Little Green Apples', and 'Hey Jude', the latter as a duet with son Gary (whom, in my opinion, would've been better suited watching Dad sing it solo).

Bing sang none of the 'Thoroughly Modern Bing' tracks on the Hollywood Palace, save for 'Talk To The Animals', which was used on the 1967 Christmas episode, two months prior to the album being recorded. He did sing 'Where The Rainbow Ends' on an April 1968 episode, but that song, while recorded during the 'Thoroughly Modern Bing' sessions, was only released as a 45rpm single in the U.S.

In my opinion, 'Both Sides Now' was Bing's best solo performance during the entire seven-season Hollywood Palace run. He performed the song live (not lip-synching to a pre-recorded track) on an April 1969 episode. It's sheer magic from start to finish, showcasing a master artist at work, in full command of his voice. Simply seated on a stool, center stage, Bing's voice soars over the lyric with ease. He gives the song a much more powerful, assured delivery than he did on the album version.



Not only did Bing promote the 'Hey Jude' songs on The Hollywood Palace, he also sang "The Straight Life" as his solo while guest-starring on the Dean Martin Show in November of 1969. As Bing said when introducing that song on the Hollywood Palace in January of that year; "You know, there are a lot of fine songs around today. I really like 'em. A record producer, who...well I guess he was more courageous than prudent...induced me to put some of them under an album cover. So I was agreeable, and, well you can show this cover to the whole family." The record producer he was referring to, of course, was Jimmy Bowen.

Greg Van Beek

KEEPING TRACK

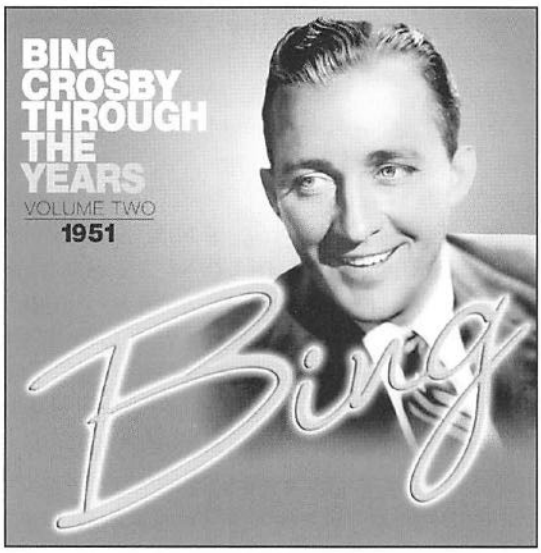
Ken Crossland looks at the new releases

COMPACT DISCS

Bing Crosby Through The Years Volume 2: 1951 Sepia Records #1122 UK £6.99

1. Maria Bonita 2. Granada 3. I Might Be Your Once-In-A-While 4. Indian Summer 5. More I Cannot Wish You 6. The Loneliness Of Evening 7. Let Me Look At You 8. Forsaking All Others (with The Andrews Sisters) 9. Sparrow In The Treetop (with The Andrews Sisters) 10. Any Town Is Paris When You're Young 11. Here Ends The Rainbow (with Betty Mullin) 12. With This Ring I Thee Wed (with Betty Mullin) 13. We All Have A Song In Our Hearts 14. Moonlight Bay (with Gary Crosby) 15. When You And I Were Young, Maggie, Blues (with Gary Crosby) 16. I Whistle A Happy Tune 17. Hello, Young Lovers 18. Getting To Know You 19. Something Wonderful 20. Old Soldiers Never Die 21. Gone Fishin' - "A" Take (with Louis Armstrong) 22. Gone Fishin' - Alternate Take (with Louis Armstrong) 23. I've Got To Fall In Love Again 24. Shanghai 25. Row, Row, Row

It was always my custom to give pride of place to the Chronological series, and it is fitting to continue to do so with the Sepia continuation of that series. This is the second issue since they picked up the mantle and very much maintains the high standards set by the first. The quality of the mastering by Robin Cherry is outstanding. Here's what Sepia say about the set on their website.



"Volume 2 in this new series of albums of Bing Crosby recordings in chronological order begins in February 1951 with two songs Bing made with The Bando Da Lua, a popular Brazilian vocal / instrumental group. On 'Maria Bonita' Bing gives a first-class display of his talent and merges perfectly with the accompaniment. 'Granada' was perhaps an unusual choice for Bing at this stage of his career, the original recording contained introductory castanets and a Spanish guitar leading on to Bing and The Bando Da Lua singing the verse in Spanish. When the song was issued on LP, this opening was edited out. Here you have the original version.

From the Broadway stage Bing recorded a sensitive reading of 'More I Cannot Wish You' from *Guys & Dolls* and 'The Loneliness Of Evening', a song cut from *South Pacific*. 'Forsaking All Others' and 'Sparrow In The Treetop' were recorded with The Andrews Sisters, both country and western songs feature some excellent harmonising. On 'Here Ends The Rainbow' Bing is accompanied by Hawaiian guitars and sings the song with Betty Mullin. 'With This Ring I Thee Wed' and 'We All Have A Song In Our Hearts' are songs new to CD.

'Moonlight Bay', performed with son Gary, is a delightful fun interpretation of this standard. The record entered the Billboard charts and peaked in 14th position. 'When You And I Were Young, Maggie, Blues', another duet with Gary enjoyed even greater success reaching #8 in the charts.

Bing returned to the Broadway stage and covered four songs from *The King And I*. 'I Whistle A Happy Tune' is ideally suited to Bing and he executes it perfectly, adding his own whistling to good effect. In his wonderful sleeve notes to the CD set *Bing – His Legendary Years*, Will Friedwald says of this song: "Crosby proves that 'Getting To Know You' was wasted on all those stiff-upper-lipped British babes who've sung it in the score's various incarnations. Rather, Crosby essays it so easily and so convincingly that it's not difficult to believe that it is precisely his cup of tea." 'Gone Fishin' ("A" take) with Louis Armstrong has deservedly become a classic and is frequently heard on radio today. The record entered the Billboard charts and peaked at #19."

Bing Crosby - Crosby Classics Varese Sarabande #302 066 905 2 USA $11.98

1. South America, Take It Away (with The Andrews Sisters) 2. But Beautiful 3. Dear Hearts And Gentle People 4. Far Away Places 5. Down The Old Ox Road (with Peggy Lee) 6. Dolores 7. Blue Skies (with Les Paul) 8. The Whiffenpoof Song 9. Now Is The Hour 10. In The Cool, Cool, Cool Of The Evening (with Jane Wyman) 11. I Surrender, Dear 12. Play A Simple Melody (with Gary Crosby) 13 Just One More Chance 14. Zing A Little Zong

(with Rosemary Clooney) 15 White Christmas

Bing's good friend in Ireland, George O'Reilly, has given us yet another CD of rare live radio recordings of Bing's hits. As most of you know, George was the man singularly responsible for Bing's wonderful 1967 St. Patrick's Day TV special ***A Little Bit of Irish****, which was released in pristine quality on DVD by Varese Sarabande in 2006. Last Christmas, George teamed once again with Varese Sarabande to give us a unique gift in the form of a CD of yuletide radio rarities from Bing titled* ***A Crosby Christmas****. In March, George and Varese combined again to bring us* ***When Irish Eyes Are Smiling: Irish Songs From His Classic Radio Broadcasts*** *and this latest offering continues the trend. See Trading Post for a discount offer from Varese Sarabande in relation to these Crosby releases.*

Bing Crosby: Gold Decca/Universal USA $15

CD1: 1. Out Of Nowhere 2. Just One More Chance 3. At Your Command 4. Where The Blue Of The Night (Meets The Gold Of The Day) 5. Love In Bloom 6. The Very Thought Of You 7. June In January 8. Soon 9. It's Easy To Remember 10. Red Sails In The Sunset 11. Pennies From Heaven 12. Sweet Leilani 13. Too Marvelous For Words 14. The Moon Got In My Eyes 15. Remember Me 16. Bob White (Whatcha Gonna Swing Tonight) (with Connee Boswell) 17. I've Got A Pocketful Of Dreams 18. You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby 19. Sierra Sue 20. Trade Winds

CD2: 1. Only Forever 2. Please 3. White Christmas 4. Moonlight Becomes You 5. Sunday, Monday Or Always 6. San Fernando Valley 7. Swinging On A Star 8. I Love You (Porter) 9. I'll Be Seeing You 10. Don't Fence Me In (with The Andrews Sisters) 11. It's Been A Long, Long Time 12. Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral 13. I Can't Begin To Tell You 14. Alexander's Ragtime Band (with Al Jolson) 15. Now Is The Hour 16. Far Away Places 17. Dear Hearts and Gentle People 18. Play A Simple Melody (with Gary Crosby) 19. Gone Fishin' (with Louis Armstrong) 20. In The Cool, Cool, Cool Of The Evening (with Jane Wyman)

Wig Wiggins is once more the driving force behind this 40 track release from Universal, featuring a handsome cover with an image that has adorned just about every form of Crosby release since the days of 10" LPs! Wig has also contributed an excellent booklet and is to be congratulated for his continued success in getting Universal to keep pushing out new Crosby CDs. The disc contains quite a few titles that are relatively rare to CD, particularly "The Very Thought Of You" which is new to CD in the States. As Universal are the owners of the original Decca masters – or at least were, until the recent fire [see Brian Weber's update earlier in this issue], the source material for these tracks are the authentic originals, although its sad to hear just how poorly some of them have survived down the years. The amount of hiss on the early tracks is quite obtrusive and I, like most collectors, have far better quality versions on some of the original Decca LPs. I have never been able to understand why Universal don't use these as the masters, rather than going back to something that is clearly inferior. Perhaps in future there will be no choice!

The Best Of Bing Crosby Universal UICY-8149 Japan $23 (equivalent)

1. Swinging On A Star 2. Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral 3. Pennies From Heaven 4. Harbour Lights 5. It's Been A Long Long Time 6. Galway Bay 7. Dear Hearts And Gentle People 8. Around The World 9. Oh What A Beautiful Morning (with Trudy Erwin) 10. Blue Hawaii 11. Now Is The Hour 12. Clementine 13. Tea For Two 14. Vaya Con Dios 15. Siboney 16. Baia 17. Sail Along Silv'ry Moon 18. Mon Coeur Est Un Violon 19. La Mer 20. Where the Blue Of The Night 21. Begin The Beguine 22. Sweet Leilani 23. Stardust 24. Changing Partners 25. Play A Simple Melody (with Gary Crosby) 26. I Surrender, Dear 27. Beyond The Reef 28. La Vie En Rose 29. Autumn Leaves 30. Danny Boy 31. Quizas, Quizas, Quizas 32. September Song 33. Mona Lisa 34. I Love Paris 35. You Are My Sunshine 36. My Blue Heaven 37. Some Enchanted Evening 38. Here Ends The Rainbow 39. Cradle Song 40. White Christmas

A reissue from Japan, but an interesting selection of tracks as compared to most things with the "Best Of" title.

Bing Crosby Collection – 10 CD set Membran Germany $34.29 (from CD Universe)

There have not been many 10 CD sets of Bing's recordings, so this is a noteworthy item for that reason alone. Announced for release on 4 November, there appear to be 250 tracks, with a pretty comprehensive coverage of Bing from the start of his career to the mid-fifties. Ideal if you haven't been buying the Chronological series. Hopefully we'll have more information next time.

And finally, a couple of non-Bing releases that nevertheless contain some very interesting items.

Nothing But The Best (Christmas Edition) – Frank Sinatra; Rhino **UK** **£11.99**
This Christmas special from the UK is interesting because the label, Rhino, has taken its standard Sinatra release and added the full Christmas album "12 Songs Of Christmas" that Frank, Bing and Fred Waring recorded in 1964. It's not a release that turns up too often, although given that there is plenty of other Sinatra Christmas stuff around, I wonder if Rhino realise that what they have added is not a Sinatra solo album. Still, if it gets us more Bing, who cares. Disc 1 by the way, is a decent "Best Of" Sinatra compilation.

Let's Face The Music – Nelson Riddle **Jasmine JASCD 495** **UK** **£8.99**
This UK compilation features Nelson Riddle, both in solo mode and backing some of the great vocalists. In this latter category, Jasmine have included the two tracks from Bing's 1957 Capitol single, "Man On Fire" and "Seven Nights A Week", the first ever commercial release of these titles since the original 78.

DVD

Holiday Inn [colorized] **Universal Home Video 61102370** **USA** **$19.99**
Holiday Inn in colour? Yes indeed. Here what Greg Van Beek has to say about it.

"On October 14th, co-incidentally the thirty-first anniversary of Bing's passing, Universal Home Video released a new three-disc box set of Bing's classic film *Holiday Inn* on DVD. One disc contains the re-mastered black and white version, (which was an Amazon Top 30 hit in 2006), the second (audio) disc contains the Decca soundtrack album, and the third disc features *Holiday Inn* in COLOR! Legend Films has done justice to this perennial favorite by painstakingly colorizing the film, utilizing the help of Jan Mucklestone, who was the personal sketch artist for Paramount costume designer Edith Head. This was obviously a labor of love, and Legend's attention to detail makes for a stunning visual. Colorization has always been a controversial subject; however it has been perfected since infancy in the mid 1980's. If you've never experienced a colorized film in recent years, *Holiday Inn* is a great place to start. The colors are vibrant and full, without being garish or obtrusive. The visual impact is breathtaking, particularly on the 'Easter Parade' number, with Bing's sea-blue eyes all aglow in the close-up. This is how the film was meant to be seen, in all its color glory. The colors in your mind come to life on the screen, just as you imagine them to be. Bing's corduroy sport jacket during the White Christmas scene is, as you would expect, a rich shade of beige. The curtain behind Bing during the 4th of July production number is spectacular in red, white and blue, as it should be. Once you see this film in color, you'll never want to watch it in b/w again! Highly recommended."

Other DVDs of note this time around include a three-disc set of ***The Color Honeymooners*** *(Jackie Gleason's 1966-70 CBS-TV variety show from Miami Beach). Volume 4 of the series includes Bing's 1969 guest appearance where he first featured the song "There's Nothing That I Haven't Sung About". My thanks to Greg for pointing that one out and also to member Frans van der Kolff for news of a 2007 Elstree Hill Entertainment/Pickwick 3 DVD-set entitled* ***"The Bob Hope Collection"****, containing "My Favourite Brunette", "The Road to Bali" and" The Road to Lebanon". The latter title of course is unusual in that it was a 1966 TV show, starring Danny Thomas with Bing and Bob as guests. First time on DVD, I believe. The catalogue number is Elstree Hill Entertainment/Pickwick 730009-1, 2, 3. Editor Malcolm was tempted to buy this set because of the inclusion of "Road to Lebanon" but was dismayed to find that the Lebanon disc contains a poor quality black and white version instead of the original colour print. The quality of the other films is not good either so it's probably best to avoid this one.*

Best for now.

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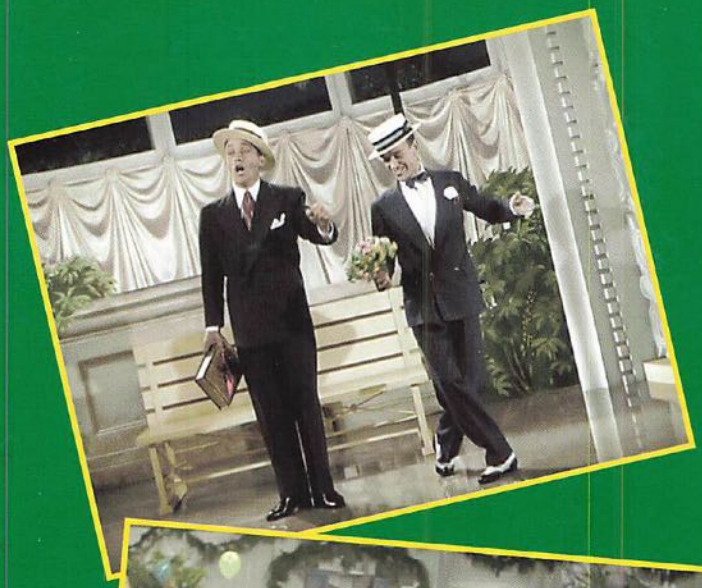

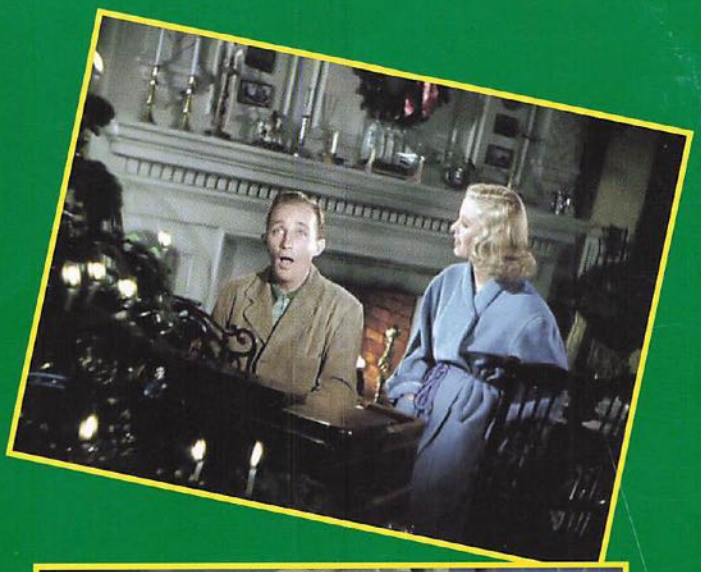

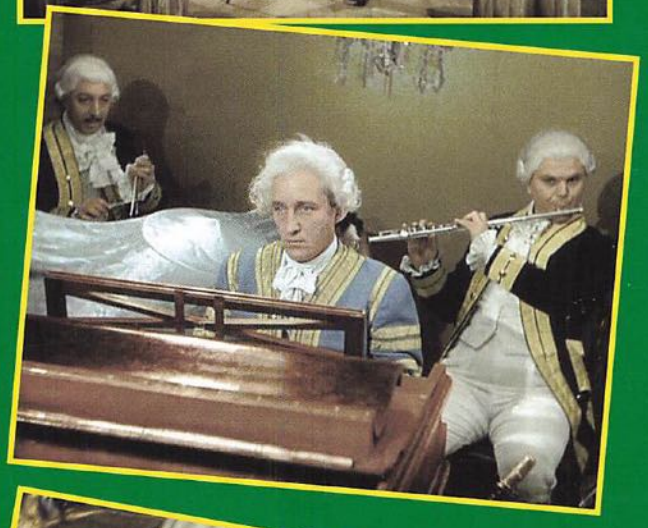

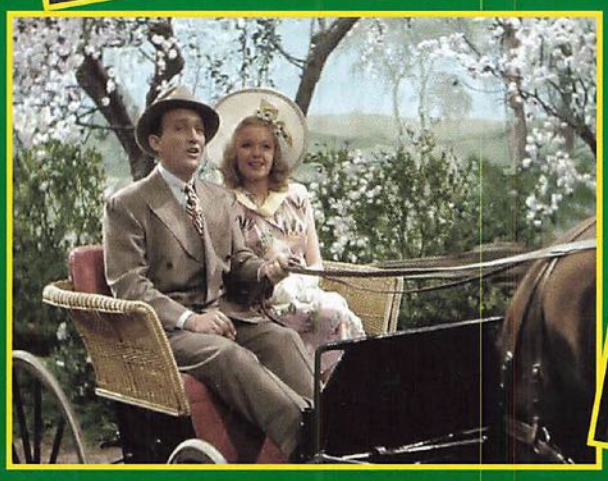

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